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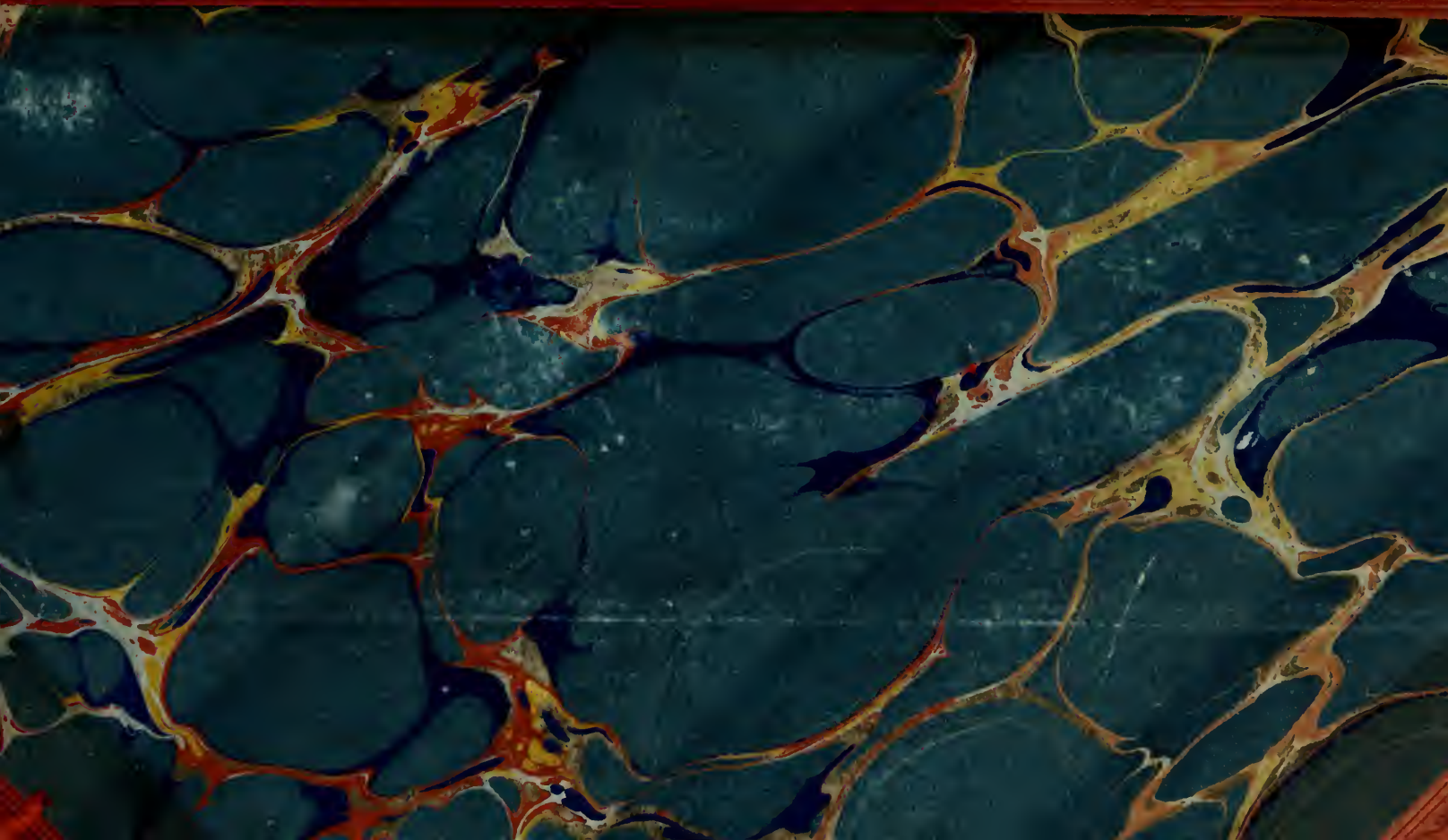

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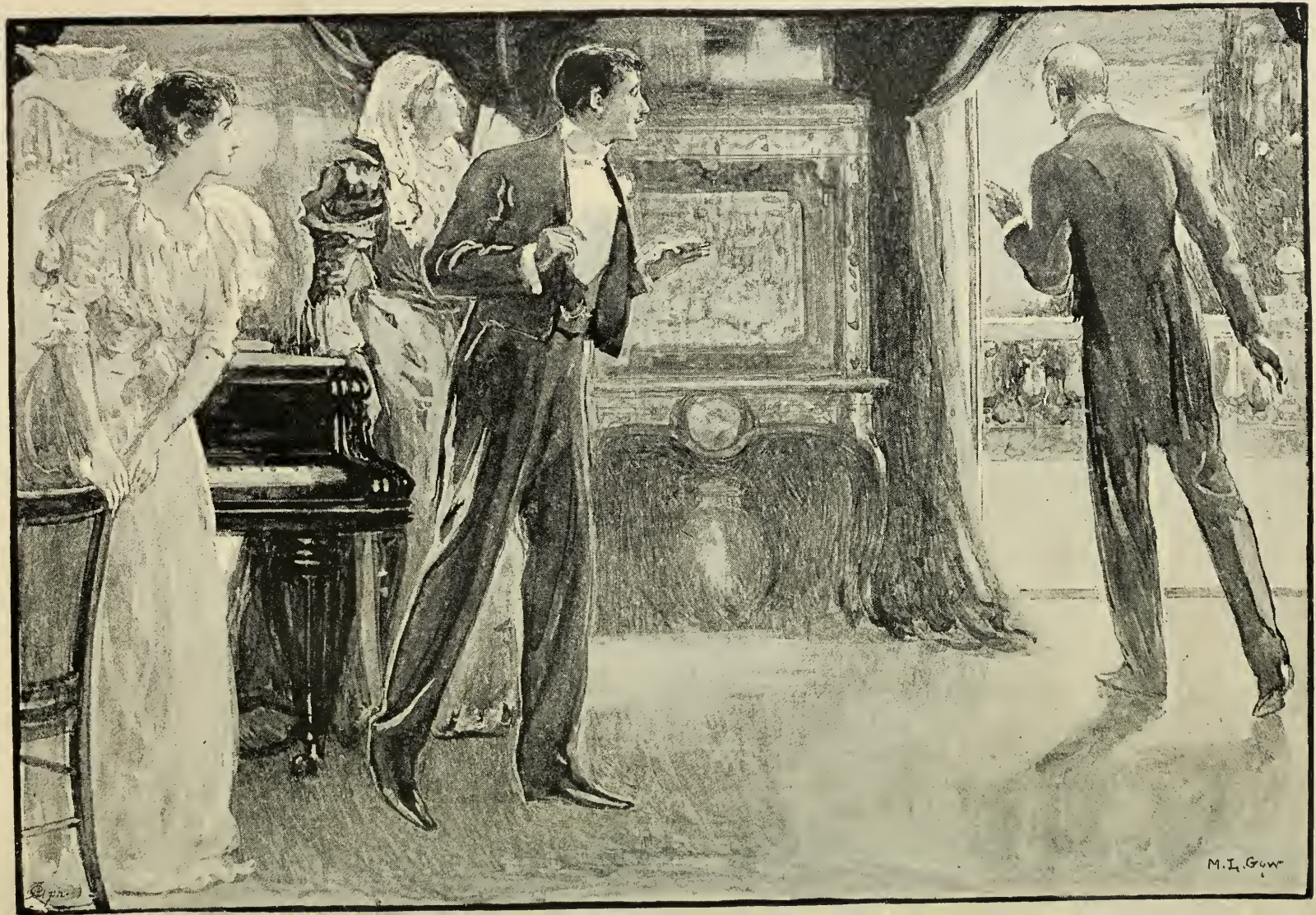
M. L. Gow

"Laden with Golden Grain."

THE

ARGOSY.

EDITED BY

CHARLES W. WOOD.

VOLUME LVIII.

July to December, 1894.

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"Ethel stopped singing on the moment and sprang to her feet, as did Lady Pell."

"'Lady Pell, last night I saw the Grey Brother.'"

"He suddenly became aware that he was no longer alone."

"It was considerably past five o'clock when our lovers found themselves back at the cottage."

"John took the ring and looked at it for a moment or two as one in doubt."

"'You do not remember your mother?' said the stranger interrogatively."

Illustrations to "Letters from South Africa;" "Ring Out the Old—Ring in the New."

THE ARGOSY.

JULY, 1894.

THE GREY MONK.

By T. W. Speight, Author of "The Mysteries of Heron Dyke."

CHAPTER XXVI.

GIOVANNA AT MAYLINGS.

WHILE the events last recorded were working themselves out at St. Oswyth's, affairs at Withington Chase had not been at a standstill.

Luigi Rispani, now known to the world under his assumed name of Lewis Clare, had taken up his quarters at the Chase in his position as Sir Gilbert's grandson, while Giovanna, otherwise Mrs. Clare, his supposed mother, was duly installed at Maylings, the house which the Baronet had had specially fitted up for her occupancy.

Plain to the verge of ugliness as far as its architectural pretensions were concerned, but roomy and homelike indoors, Maylings, which dated from the era of the Second George, was far too large a domicile for the limited requirements of Mrs. Clare; so much so, indeed, that Sir Gilbert contented himself with having about half its number of rooms furnished and made habitable. Its situation was somewhat lonely, there being no other house within a quarter of a mile of it. It stood back from the high road, fronting a huge clump of evergreens and a small carriage sweep, but from the drawing-room windows in the rear of the house one looked into a charming old-fashioned flower-garden. To Giovanna it all seemed very lonely and very dull.

One other thing, however, Sir Gilbert did which filled her with unfeigned pleasure, and that was to make her a present of a horse and brougham. And within a few days there arrived a grand piano, of which Giovanna at once determined to avail herself to the utmost. She had been gifted by nature with a full rich contralto voice, together with a large measure of that musical talent which seems inherent

in the children of the Sunny South ; but her life hitherto had afforded her no opportunity of cultivating either one or the other. Now, however, her opportunity had come, and the very first time Captain Verinder came to see her, she requested him to find her a competent teacher, male or female, she did not care which. Thus it presently came to pass that Signor Sampi, a grey-haired but clever musician, journeyed twice a week to Maylings, and in the cultivation of her long-neglected gifts Giovanna found a new pleasure in life.

Not for many a long year had such a sensation been known among the good folk of Mapleford and its neighbourhood as that with which Sir Gilbert Clare had provided them, and they did not fail to appreciate it to the full.

Giovanna had not been settled at Maylings more than a couple of days, before one carriage after another of the local gentry began to include it in their round of afternoon calls, and she found herself the recipient of quite a shower of visiting cards. Then presently Giovanna found herself under the necessity of returning at least a portion of the calls. She was a firm believer in first impressions, and for some of her callers she had conceived an immediate dislike which caused her silently to determine to see as little of them as possible in time to come. That, of course, is not the code of English society, which teaches us to smile our sweetest on those whom we dislike the most. But Giovanna had always been in the habit of giving way to her impulses, and she still had much to learn.

Sir Gilbert had felt from the first that it would not do for his daughter-in-law to live entirely alone. She must have some one of suitable age and character to fill the post of companion to her, whose services should be remunerated out of his own pocket. Accordingly he made it his business to call upon Mrs. Merton, the vicar's wife, and enlist her services in his behalf. It did not take that lady long to find precisely the kind of person Sir Gilbert wanted, in a certain Mrs. Tew, the widow of a minor canon, who, owing to some unfortunate speculations on her late husband's part, had found herself at his death but just removed beyond the verge of penury. Mrs. Tew was a lively, well-preserved little lady of fifty-five, who had seen something of the world in her youth, was tolerably well read, and contrived to keep herself fairly *au courant* with the chief topics of the day. She had not been long in her new position before she discovered that one of her principal duties would be to "make talk," both when people called upon Mrs. Clare, and when the latter returned their visits. No task could have been found more congenial to the canon's widow. She had always cherished the opinion that she was gifted with considerable conversational powers, although it was one which her late husband, who was of a morose, brooding disposition, had not encouraged her to reduce to practice, either in public or private. Now, however, that an opportunity was afforded her of compensating herself for the repression of years, she did not fail to avail herself of it. And as the

little lady had a really pleasant manner, and never seemed at a loss for either ideas or words, and as no slightest tincture of malice ever tipped her tongue, everyone with whom she was brought into contact had a good word to say about her.

At no time had Giovanna been a loquacious woman, and it was not likely that she would willingly allow the people among whom she now mixed to discover how terribly ignorant she was about many of the subjects on which they talked so glibly. She had naturally good manners, and had been well trained by her English mother as long as that mother had lived, besides which she had excellent taste in dress, all of which told in her favour. But, when it became a question of something beyond manners and dress, Giovanna knew that, for her own credit's sake, her part in the social comedy must to all intents and purposes be a silent one. Her place was to listen to everybody with smiling courtesy, and to look as if she felt an intelligent interest in all that was talked about, but to say as little as possible in return; and, above all, unless driven into a corner, never to originate any proposition of her own.

It was precisely here that she found Mrs. Tew so invaluable. That lady proved herself a person of infinite tact and resource. Whenever there seemed a risk of Mrs. Clare being drawn into a conversation about matters concerning which, as the canon's widow surmised, she was probably more or less ignorant, she, Mrs. Tew, came boldly to her rescue, and by means of some apposite remark or pertinent question, addressed directly to some other person in the company, contrived to attract the current of talk to herself, or else to deflect it into some less dangerous channel.

Giovanna was sufficiently clear-sighted to see through Mrs. Tew's object, and was proportionately grateful; not being like some of her sex, who would have been more than annoyed at finding that their paid dependent had taken upon herself to gauge their ignorance, and had had the impertinence to assume that their educational acquirements were not on a par with those of the people with whom, for anything the said dependent was supposed to know to the contrary, they had been in the habit of mixing from youth upward. But whatever her faults in other directions might be, Giovanna had no false pride about her, and was not afflicted with any deficiency of common-sense.

Then again, the canon's widow had the tact never to bore Giovanna with too much, either of her talk or her company, when they two were at home together. The widow had her own cosy sitting-room, and there, when her presence was not required elsewhere, what between needlework and novel-reading, she never found the time hang heavy on her hands. The late canon had objected to novels on principle as being a species of mental pabulum beneath the consideration of reasonable beings, as well as entailing results which in many cases were positively harmful, and as long as he lived his wife

had meekly acquiesced in his dictum. Now, however, that she was her own mistress, she proceeded to indemnify her starved imagination for its long abstinence. Fortunately there was a very tolerable library in Mapleford, which for her proved an inexhaustible mine of intellectual treasures. It mattered not that numbers of the works on its shelves dated back a quarter of a century or more, to her they were as new, fresh, and wonderful—perhaps more so—as if they had borne yesterday's imprimatur. And how she revelled in the love stories, dear little lady that she was! Hers had been a repressed and unsatisfied existence, and now when she sat, often till long after the rest of the household was abed, deep in some sweet tale of love and constancy, of partings and comings together again, she would feel for a little while as if she were again a girl in her teens with all life's possibilities still before her. Then, when she had read the last line of the last chapter, she would shut the book with a sigh and remove her spectacles, and murmur under her breath, "What would dear Stephen say if he knew how I had been occupying my time? I am afraid he would think me greatly to blame." For all that, undeterred by any qualms of conscience, she would begin a fresh novel next day with an unappeased appetite.

While Sir Gilbert had been at the pains to provide his daughter-in-law with a suitable companion, he doubtless expected, if the matter ever crossed his mind, that she would provide her own maid. But Giovanna, who all her life had been used to wait on herself, would have been quite satisfied to go on doing the same for ever had not Captain Verinder impressed upon her that, for a person in her position, a maid was an absolute necessity. Further than that, he undertook to supply her with the necessity in question, which he did in the person of Lucille Fretin, the daughter of one of his many more or less impecunious foreign acquaintances. It was quite understood between Lucille and the Captain that she should keep both her eyes and ears open, so as to be in a position to furnish him with a minute account of everything that went on under the roof at Maylings, together with any scraps of gossip, or information which might reach her anent the Chase and its inmates.

Captain Verinder, in view of the unaccountable dislike which Sir Gilbert Clare had conceived for him, kept strictly within the limits of the line of conduct which he had laid down for himself. The Chase itself he never went near, but on one evening in each week, when he knew that Giovanna was not dining with the Baronet, he ran down by the train which reached Mapleford at seven o'clock, driving from the station to Maylings in a fly, and walking back in time to catch the last up train.

When Giovanna, before her arrival at Maylings, put into her uncle's hands the cheque given her by Sir Gilbert, with a request that he would get it cashed for her, he made up his mind that ten pounds out of the hundred should find their way into his own pocket, as

representing his modest commission on the very clever stroke of business which he had just succeeded in bringing to so fortunate a termination. He would give her further to understand that he should look forward to being allowed a similar sum out of each quarterly cheque of which his niece would henceforward be the recipient. But when, without a word or a hint on his part, Giovanna put into his hands, not ten, but twenty pounds of the hundred, he determined to wait and see what the next quarter would do for him; for it seemed not unlikely that he might benefit more by trusting to he generosity than by putting forward anything in the shape of a definite claim on his own account.

Certainly, forty, or even eighty pounds a year was not a very magnificent sum: still, it would make an acceptable addition to his limited income; besides which, he looked forward to squeezing a further allowance out of Luigi. Of course, when in the not distant future, as he trusted, Luigi should have become Sir Lewis Clare, with a rent-roll of something like eight thousand a year (for there was little doubt, unless he should make a consummate ass of himself meanwhile, that his grandfather would constitute him his heir), then indeed matters would assume a very different aspect so far as he, Augustus Verinder, was concerned. Meanwhile it was the day of small things and he must content himself as best he could to play a waiting game.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"MR. LEWIS CLARE."

TWICE in each week, on Sunday and Wednesday, Giovanna dined at the Chase. It was a standing invitation which included Mrs. Tew, while Everard Lisle made a frequent fifth at the table. Luigi was there as a matter of course.

With his acknowledgment of his grandson and his daughter-in-law a fresh element had been imported into Sir Gilbert's life; but settled habits had too strong a hold upon him, and the groove in which he habitually moved had been trodden by him for too many years to allow of much deviation on his part, even under circumstances so exceptional as those the evolution of which we have thus far followed.

The fact of Luigi being now domiciled at the Chase in no way influenced or affected the position of Everard Lisle. Seeing that his grandson could neither play chess nor backgammon, Sir Gilbert was still as much dependent on Lisle as before for his after-dinner game, which seemed to have now become one of the settled institutions of his life.

If between Everard and Luigi there was no particular show of cordiality, as there certainly was not, there was at least a veneer of friendliness which, as is so often the case, served as a very fair substi-

tute for the real article. Indeed, Lisle on his part had no desire to be on other than friendly terms with his employer's grandson; but Luigi would gladly have given a helping hand, could he have seen his way to do so, in causing the other to be sent about his business; or have taken steps to poison his grandfather's mind against him, had he not felt that the game was too dangerous a one to be entered upon while his own footing at the Chase had about it such elements of instability. That he was secretly jealous of Everard's influence over Sir Gilbert and of the latter's undisguised liking for him, hardly needs to be recorded; but he had wit enough to allow nothing of it to be seen on the surface; besides which, both his time and his thoughts were just then occupied with matters which concerned him far more nearly.

As may, or may not, be borne in mind by the reader, Sir Gilbert, at a certain memorable interview, intimated that, in his opinion, it was not too late for Luigi to apply himself to the acquisition of certain of those accomplishments which he, the Baronet, held to be essential to the education of a gentleman. Thus it came to pass that Luigi had not been more than a week at the Chase before he found himself put into the hands of the Rev. Eldred Merton, the vicar of St. Michael's, who had been known in his time as a successful "coach," with a view of having at least a smattering of classical lore instilled into him.

Then for Luigi began a period of purgatory, such as in his after-life he never looked back to without a shudder. He was utterly devoid of linguistic gifts, in any case as far as the dead languages were concerned, and before long he became the despair of his tutor; who, however, would not acknowledge himself beaten, for one reason, perhaps, because, being a married man with a numerous family, Sir Gilbert's guineas were very acceptable to him. So, four mornings in each week saw Luigi at the vicarage, and when his two hours' lesson had come to an end, it would have been hard to say whether pupil or tutor was the more rejoiced of the two.

But there was another series of lessons which Luigi was compelled by his grandfather to undergo, and which to him were a source of torture almost as keen, although different in kind, as that caused him by his classical studies. The lessons in question were those necessitated by the art of learning to ride. As it happened, Luigi had never been on horseback in his life, nor would he ever of his own free will have aspired to that "bad eminence." Both morally and physically he was an arrant coward, and, from his point of view, everyone who bestrode a horse ran a certain amount of risk to life and limb, which, for his part, he would very gladly have eschewed had it been in his power to do so. But his grandfather's orders were imperative, and there was nothing for him but to obey with the best grace possible. So, there being no such thing as a riding-school at Mapleford, Mr. Marsh from the livery-stables came over to the Chase on three after-

noons in each week "in order to put the young squire through his paces," as he termed it. Never, as later on he openly avowed, had he had a pupil who made such slow progress and did him so little credit. "He's a regular funker, that's what he is," he would tell his wife in confidence. "He has no more pluck than a chicken. Not a bit like his father used to be at his age. Why, before Master Alec was eighteen, there was hardly a fence or a gate in the county that he hadn't topped. This chap will never top one as long as he lives."

Truth to tell, Luigi never succeeded in getting the better of the nervousness which invariably assailed him the moment he found himself astride a horse's back. After he had taken his twentieth lesson his timidity was as extreme as when he took his first. He was a coward by nature, and it was impossible for him to be anything else.

Being the kind of young man he was, that he should be terribly bored by the limitations of his life at the Chase goes without saying. To begin with, he hated the country. He missed his London acquaintances and the free-and-easy life to which he had been used in the metropolis. Then again, as the days and weeks went by, he never quite succeeded in feeling at his ease when in the presence of Sir Gilbert, nor even of demeaning himself as if he were. When they were together, it seemed as though he were unable to rid himself of a vivid sense of the guilty part he was playing, such as rarely troubled his easy-going conscience at other times. His manner was timid and nervous; indeed, whenever the Baronet betrayed an extra touch of irritability, it might almost be termed servile. He had somewhat the air of a cur who is conscious that the lash may come down on him at any moment.

But, by-and-by, when he perceived that it was possible to do so without much risk of detection, he began, on two or three afternoons a week, to find his way to the *King's Head* at Mapleford (being always careful to get back to the Chase in time for dinner), where was a billiard-room which was frequented by all the fast young men of the little town. There Luigi felt himself thoroughly at home; there his only happy hours were spent. He could handle a cue with some degree of proficiency, and, as the grandson of Sir Gilbert Clare and the prospective owner of Withington Chase, he took a certain social precedence over the other frequenters of the room. For the first time in his life he found himself flattered and made much of, and the sensation was an eminently agreeable one. But such company cannot be indulged in without a certain amount of expense, and it was a necessity of the position which had been so ungrudgingly accorded him that Luigi should spend his money with an air of careless liberality which was far from being native to him. Thus it fell out that what remained of the baronet's fifty pounds, after Captain Verinder had borrowed five of it, and he had equipped

himself with a limited supply of those articles which the latter assured him were absolutely indispensable to his new position, began, when once he had taken to frequenting the *King's Head*, to melt away in a quite alarming fashion. As a consequence, he was presently compelled to apply to Giovanna for a loan of ten pounds, which, however, she refused to let him have till he had given her his solemn promise to repay her out of Sir Gilbert's next cheque.

At this time Luigi saw very little of Captain Verinder, or rather, the latter saw very little of him, although he more than once sent word through Giovanna that if it were not convenient for his nephew to meet him at Maylings, he had but to name his own time and place and the Captain would not fail to be there. But Luigi was never without an excuse of some kind for not making an appointment, and, indeed, exhibited a quite unaccountable reluctance to indulge in the pleasure of a *tête-a-tête* with his uncle. What he told himself was, that he was his own master now, at least as far as Verinder was concerned, and wasn't going to let himself be "preached at" by anybody: and that the Captain would preach at him, as he termed it, whenever they should come together, he felt fully assured. Besides, he had already discovered that his respected relative was possessed of a quite abnormal faculty for borrowing money, and having himself such a limited supply of that commodity, he was affectionately unwilling to subject his uncle to the pain of a refusal.

"Ungrateful hound!" exclaimed the Captain one day in a rage to Giovanna. "Does he dream, after all I have done for him, that he is at liberty to cast me off like an old glove? I will teach him a different lesson from that before he is much older."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE PROGRESS OF EVENTS.

Among other letters which Sir Gilbert Clare found on his breakfast-table on a certain September morning, was one which caused him to wrinkle his forehead and arch his shaggy eyebrows in a way by no means usual with him. Before laying it down he read it carefully through a second time, and then, unheedful of his other correspondence, and of the small china teapot at his elbow which was always brought in by Trant, the butler, the moment his master made his appearance, he lapsed into one of those fits of absent-mindedness which, in his case, were becoming more frequent with advancing years.

Luigi, from the opposite side of the table, was watching him with furtive eyes, and wondering whether it would be possible to obtain a sly glance over the letter which had had such an unusual effect upon his "grandfather."

Could he have had his wish, he would have read as follows:

"The Shrublands, Tuesday.

"My dear Gilbert.—Please turn to the signature before reading further and satisfy yourself that it is really I who am writing to you after all this long time; for indeed, cousin, it must be nearly, if not quite, a score of years since we met last (it was shortly after my marriage, I remember), and no communication of any kind has passed between us in the interim.

"As you may perhaps recollect, I was always afflicted with a restless and roving disposition, and since poor dear Sir Thomas's death (now eight years ago) I have felt no disposition to permanently settle anywhere, but have preferred to live a wandering, Bedouin kind of life, pitching my tent here, there, or anywhere, but never for very long at a time. It is a species of existence which, although it is lacking in those elements of stability so precious to the majority of my home-clinging, hearth-loving sex, has yet about it certain elements of variety and entertainment which, in my estimation, more than serve to counterbalance its shortcomings.

"Finding myself here at the Shrublands in fulfilment of a promise of long-standing, and within half-a-dozen miles of your place, it has seemed to me (old memories even now not being quite dormant within me) that I could not do otherwise than make you aware of my propinquity and, further, intimate that if you can 'put me up' for a couple of nights—no longer—(together with my companion and maid), I shall be pleased to find myself once more under a roof which is associated in my mind with so many pleasant memories of the days that are no more.

"Your affectionate cousin,

"Louisa Pell."

Between Sir Gilbert and Lady Pell, when they were young people, there had been a something which, if it could not in strictness be termed a romantic episode, yet had in it the possibilities of one, and, had the fates proved propitious, would probably have eventuated in a way which would have changed the current of both their lives.

It was during the lifetime of Sir Gilbert's father and mother that Louisa Grayson, a tall, dashing, somewhat hoydenish girl of eighteen, was invited on a long visit to Withington Chase. Mr. Gilbert Clare, as he was then, who had just returned from a journey in Central America, had felt himself drawn towards his high-spirited, bright-eyed cousin, who, although few people would have called her handsome, was possessed of some singularly attractive qualities; while she, on her side, fell frankly in love with him. But it was not to be. Miss Grayson was summoned home by the dangerous illness of a relative, and her cousin let her go without putting to her the one definite question which her heart was hungering to be asked; after which

quite a number of years passed before they met again. On his part, at least, it could have been nothing more than a passing fancy, seeing that within a twelvemonth of their parting, Sir Gilbert had seen, fallen in love with, and married his first wife. Whether in Lady Pell's case it had proved to be more than a passing fancy was a question which she alone could have answered.

"I shall be very glad to see Louisa, very glad indeed," murmured Sir Gilbert under his breath when he had read her letter for the second time, "and I take it as a favour on her part that she has offered to come to the Chase. Of course at our time of life—although I don't forget that she is a number of years younger than I—she cannot be so foolish as to imagine—— No, no; I will give her credit for more sense than that. She is no longer a flighty romantic schoolgirl; indeed, I remember that when I saw her last, she impressed me as having developed into quite a woman of the world. Still, a widow—— Um—um."

With that, as already related, he lapsed into one of his musing fits, which lasted till the entrance of Trant, who coughed and gazed reproachfully at his master on finding that he had not yet poured out his first cup of tea.

The first thing the Baronet did on retiring to his study after breakfast was to reply to Lady Pell's letter.

"My dear Louisa," he wrote,—"Come to the Chase by all means —you ought to have come years ago—and stay as long as it suits you—the longer the better. You may rely upon receiving the heartiest of welcomes from

"Your affectionate cousin,

"Gilbert Clare."

This missive he at once despatched by a mounted groom to the Shrublands.

Now, in the course of the forenoon of the day preceding the arrival of Lady Pell's note, Giovanna had driven over from Maylings and had asked to see Sir Gilbert. The proceeding was such an unusual one on her part that it was not without a spice of anxiety that he joined her in the morning-room. But she at once reassured him that, as far as he was concerned, nothing serious was the matter.

"I have this morning received a letter from home," began Giovanna, "that is to say, from Catanzaro," she added by way of correcting herself, "which informs me that my grandmother (my father's mother), who is over ninety years of age, is dangerously ill and has expressed a strong desire to see me. Under the circumstances, Sir Gilbert, you will probably agree with me that it is my duty to hasten to her side. It will doubtless be the last opportunity I shall have of seeing her, but I did not care to set out on so long a journey without first taking your opinion in the matter."

"That was very thoughtful of you, my dear madam, very thoughtful

indeed," replied the Baronet with a gratified air. "It is clearly your duty to lose no time in carrying out your venerable relative's wish. Is it your desire that your son should accompany you?"

"Oh dear, no, Sir Gilbert," replied Mrs. Clare hastily. "In cases where there is sickness in a house I have always found that young men are only in the way. They are not merely uncomfortable themselves but a source of discomfort to others."

"Very possibly you are right, madam. But my idea in mentioning your son was that he would be in a position to act as your travelling escort."

"But I am quite used to travelling alone, I assure you, Sir Gilbert, and am not in the least timid. For instance, when I returned from America I was quite alone."

"Possibly so, madam, possibly so," returned the Baronet stiffly. "That is a matter which pertains to the past and with which I have nothing to do. But it seemed to me that, in the position you now occupy as my daughter-in-law, you ought not to——"

"Pardon me, Sir Gilbert," interposed Giovanna in her smoothest tones, the blunder of which she had been guilty dawning on her with a rush, "my remark had reference to an escort of the male sex only. It was far from my intention to travel alone. As a matter of course my maid will accompany me."

The Baronet's brow cleared in some measure. "Um—um. I had not thought about your maid. Of course—of course. But what, now, if Mrs. Tew were also to keep you company? In such a case expense need be no consideration."

"It is very kind of you to say so, sir. My first thought was to ask Mrs. Tew to share my journey, but then I called to mind that she is no longer so young as she has been, and that she is far from strong; and as it is my intention to get through to Catanzaro without stopping anywhere longer than may be necessitated by the change from one train or vehicle to another, I would not willingly run the risk of her breaking down by the way."

"Probably you are right, madam; the affair had not struck me in that light. As you say, at Mrs. Tew's time of life such a long and hurried journey might overtask her strength."

Speaking thus, he crossed to a side table where were pen and ink, and having extracted his cheque book from his breast pocket, he proceeded with the deliberation of old age to fill up a cheque for thirty guineas. Giovanna rose as he recrossed the room. She understood that the interview was at an end.

"Here is something towards defraying the expenses of your journey," he said as he pressed the cheque into her hand. "I trust that you will find your aged relative much improved by the time you reach her and that she may be spared to you for several years to come. Should you wish to see Lewis before setting out, as I presume you will, you will find him at the vicarage, which you will drive past on your way home. We shall miss you greatly and shall hope to see

you again as speedily as may be. And, by the way, will you inform Mrs. Tew, with my compliments, that during your unavoidable absence we shall expect her at the Chase as usual."

Sir Gilbert escorted Giovanna to the door, where her brougham was waiting. As they shook hands and bade each other adieu no slightest prevision was in the mind of either that, as far as this world was concerned, it was their final farewell. For, like so many of us, they were the slaves of events, already in process of evolution, of which they had no cognisance and in the bringing about of which they had no share. They never met again.

Giovanna did not fail to deliver Sir Gilbert's message to Mrs. Tew, adding, "And of course the brougham will be wholly at your disposal while I am away."

Tears came into the little lady's eyes. "Both you and Sir Gilbert are most kind," she said, "and I am at a loss how to thank you sufficiently."

There had been no thought or intention on Giovanna's part of taking either Mrs. Tew or Lucille with her to Italy, and although, the moment her oversight was made patent to her, she hastened to assure Sir Gilbert that she had all along meant her maid to accompany her, the statement had merely emanated from her on the spur of the moment as being the only way in which she could extricate herself from the difficulty. Putting aside the additional expense to which she would have been put, which she felt she could ill afford, there existed other and more cogent reasons why neither Lucille nor anyone else who knew her as Sir Gilbert Clare's daughter-in-law should accompany her to Catanzaro. For one thing, certain of her relatives on her father's side were little removed above the rank of peasants, while none of them were of a kind that would have reflected credit on her new position. Further, to none of them, for certain prudential reasons, had the secret of that position been divulged. Nobody at Catanzaro, when she should reappear among them, would know her as other than the daughter of the late Giuseppe Rispani, landlord of the *Golden Fig*, who, because she had the misfortune to have an Englishwoman for her mother, had chosen to take up her abode in that mother's native country. It was plainly imperative that on no account must Lucille be allowed to keep her company on her journey; but, for all that, after what she had told Sir Gilbert, it would not do to leave the girl behind at Maylings.

The letter from Catanzaro had, in the first instance, been addressed to Captain Verinder's lodgings, and had been reposted by him to Vanna, who now telegraphed to her uncle that she should leave Mapleford by a certain train, and requested him to meet her at the London terminus, which he accordingly did. Taking him out of earshot of her maid, Vanna in very few words put him in possession of the facts of the case. He quite agreed with her that her journey must be undertaken alone. So presently the girl was given half-a-sovereign

and told that she could go back to her parents; in other words, take a holiday till she should hear from Captain Verinder, and that meanwhile her wages would go on as usual. It was an arrangement which suited Lucille to a nicety. Then Captain Verinder escorted his niece from one terminus to the other, and a little later saw her off by the Continental night mail.

But there were certain features in connection with Giovanna's proposed visit to Catanzaro which she had not deemed it advisable to reveal to anyone. The fact was that old Signora Rispani was quite a wealthy person for one in her station of life, and Vanna, who had always been her favourite grand-daughter, was drawn to her death-bed more by the hope of inheriting, if not the whole, then a very considerable portion of her money, than by any real affection which she entertained for the old lady. In telling Sir Gilbert that her grandmother had expressed a strong desire to see her she had stated more than she was warranted in doing. In reality it was the signora's medical attendant who, in accordance with an arrangement Giovanna had made with him before coming to England, had informed her by letter of her grandmother's critical condition. It will be enough to state here that the signora held out for several weeks after her grand-daughter's arrival, so that it was not till towards the middle of October that Mrs. Clare, richer by some hundreds of pounds than she had been on her arrival, once more set her face Englandwards, with a devout hope in her heart that she should never be under the necessity of setting eyes on Catanzaro or any of its inhabitants again.

But many strange things had happened while she had been away.

CHAPTER XXIX.

ARRIVALS AT THE CHASE.

It was in the course of the afternoon of the second day after the departure of Mrs. Clare that Lady Pell, accompanied by Miss Ethel Thursby, arrived at Withington Chase (her maid, in company with the luggage, would follow later on). They had been driven over from the Shrublands in Mrs. Forester's landau. Sir Gilbert was waiting in the entrance-hall to receive them. As Lady Pell advanced he went forward with outstretched hand.

"Welcome, Louisa, thrice welcome to the Chase!" he said in his most cordial tones. "It is indeed an immense pleasure to me to see you again after so long a time." With that he drew her closer, and stooping a little—for tall though her ladyship was, he was considerably the taller of the two—imprinted a cousinly salute on her cheek, which might once have been round, but was so no longer.

Sir Gilbert had never kissed her but once previously, when she was a girl of eighteen, and only a few hours before her mother's illness had

summoned her away at a moment's notice. It was a kiss which had given birth in her heart to many delicious hopes, never destined to be fulfilled, and it still lived in her memory like the faint vague fragrance exhaled from a *pot-pourri.* But to-day her cousin's second kiss, so wholly unexpected, recalled in all its pain and all its sweetness that incident of long ago. For a moment or two her heart throbbed so that she could not speak. Then, with a little shiver, she came back to the present.

"It is very kind of you, cousin, to say such pretty things to me," she replied, with a curious little tremor in her voice and a dim wistful smile. Then, more composedly: "But, indeed, I must ask you to believe me, when I assure you that I am as pleased to find myself again at the dear old Chase as you can possibly be to see me here. And now you must allow me to introduce to you Miss Ethel Thursby, a very dear young friend of mine, who is good enough to keep an old woman company, and put up with her vagaries while her regular companion is incapacitated by illness." Then turning to Ethel: "Child, this is my kinsman, Sir Gilbert Clare, of whom you have many times heard me speak."

"It is a happiness to me to welcome Miss Thursby under my roof, not merely for my cousin's sake, but also for her own," said the Baronet, with simple old-fashioned courtesy as he took Ethel's timidly offered hand in his. Next moment a thrill went through him from head to foot, which even extended to his finger-tips and was perceptible to Ethel, while a strangely startled look leapt into his eyes. It was as if a ghost from out the dead past had suddenly confronted him. Then he passed his hand across his eyes as if to sweep away the vision, murmuring under his breath as he did so: "No—no; I must indeed be getting into my dotage even to imagine such a thing."

He turned away with a stifled sigh. Lady Pell had observed nothing. She was gazing round the old entrance-hall, all the features of which had that half-strange, half-familiar air which inanimate things have a way of putting on when we have not seen them for a long time, more particularly when they happen to have formed the framework of some unforgettable episode in our private history.

Presently Mrs. Burton, the housekeeper, conducted the ladies to their rooms, and nothing more was seen of them till after the second dinner gong had sounded. It may be here recorded that when Ethel accompanied Lady Pell on her visit to Withington Chase, she was wholly unaware that Everard Lisle was living within half a mile of it, and that there was rarely more than one day out of the seven on which he did not spend some hours there. If the place had ever been mentioned in her hearing as that where Everard was now located, it had escaped her memory—which by no means implies that Everard himself was forgotten.

To-day, however, Lisle had not been asked to dine at the Chase, for one reason, because Mr. Kinaby, the steward, whose health had

improved during the last few days, was desirous of his help in going through certain accounts and other matters connected with his stewardship.

On entering the drawing-room the two ladies found both the Baronet and Luigi there.

"Louisa," said Sir Gilbert, "allow me to introduce to you my grandson, Lewis Clare, the only son of my late eldest son, John Alexander Clare, whom I think you met once or twice when he was a youth. Lewis—my cousin, Lady Pell." Then, a few seconds later, when her ladyship and the young man had shaken hands: "Miss Thursby—my grandson."

The young people contented themselves with a simple bow, after which they each drew back a little way. Then said Sir Gilbert aside to her ladyship: "Of course you have heard that only quite recently was I made aware of the existence of my grandson."

"It would have been impossible for me not to have heard of it. It is the talk of the county—in everybody's mouth."

"And more than one pretty version of the affair has got into circulation, I do not doubt. Some people have more imagination than they are aware of. Give them but the merest thread of fact, and they will weave out of it a tissue of romance which does credit to their inventive powers, if to nothing else."

"But is not that your own fault in some measure? The central fact of the affair, that you had found your long-lost grandson and had installed him at the Chase, was one which you had evidently no wish to conceal, even had it been in your power to do so. Why, then—— But, really, I have no right to question you in the matter."

"Don't say that. Why, then, you were about to add, throw any cloak of concealment round the subordinate facts of the case? I will tell you why, my dear Louisa. Simply because, although I have chosen to acknowledge my grandson and to instal him in that position which the world—very mistakenly—regards as his by inalienable right, it by no means follows that there are not circumstances connected with the antecedents and personal history both of himself and his mother which I have no intention, if I can anyhow avoid it, of allowing to become public property. You, however, are in an altogether different position; from you I desire to have no concealments in the affair, and after dinner I will tell you all there is to tell."

It was with a curious mixture of sulkiness and gratification that Luigi took Miss Thursby in to dinner. His sulkiness arose from the fact that in the company of this beautiful girl he felt strangely bashful and out of his element; for once he was possessed by a vivid consciousness of being the very inferior creature that he really was, and it was one of those unsought conclusions which we prefer not to have forced upon us. His gratification arose from the fact that for the first time in his life he found himself in a position to treat a being in every other way so much above him, not merely as his social equal

but as his inferior; for one of the parlour-maids who was deeply smitten with Luigi's good looks, and acted as a sort of house spy for him, had already whispered in his ear that the extremely pretty girl whom Lady Pell had brought with her was nothing more than her ladyship's companion.

Only a paid companion, and, as such, one who ought to feel herself honoured by whatever attentions the grandson of Sir Gilbert Clare might choose to pay her (for by this time Luigi had got into the way of taking himself and his position quite seriously), and yet, try as he might, he could not feel himself at home in her company. He felt altogether different when in the society of Miss Jennings, the barmaid at the *King's Head*, who, in her way, was a very pretty girl, and also a good girl. When with Miss J., as she was generally called by the young men of the billiard-room, he never felt in the slightest degree bashful, or ill at ease, and certainly never at a loss for words. Why, they two would go on "chaffing" each other for half an hour at a stretch when Miss J. happened to be in the humour and to have no other customers to claim her attention. And yet for all that, although he could not have told himself why, in his secret heart he did not wish Miss Thursby to be a bit different from what she was, for she was a revelation to him.

What on earth was he to talk to her about? he asked himself. His grandfather and Lady Pell were immersed in their recollections, and to go on sitting by Miss Thursby like a dummy was fast becoming intolerable. Evidently he must make a plunge of some kind.

"I suppose—er—that you and Lady Pell have knocked about a good deal together," at length he ventured to observe. Then seeing Ethel's look of surprise, he added hastily: "I mean that you have been great travellers, you know. I heard her ladyship say just now that something—er—put her in mind of—of something else she had seen abroad."

"I have only had the pleasure of knowing Lady Pell for about a couple of months," answered Ethel. "I believe she has been a considerable traveller in her time; indeed, she was to have gone to France this autumn had not sickness broken out in the house of the friend whom she was about to visit." It was a relief to Luigi to find that Miss Thursby was not a travelled person, as, in that case, she might have chosen to talk about things of which he knew next to nothing, and so have made his ignorance more patent than was desirable.

"I suppose, now, that you are pretty well acquainted with London," was his next remark. He was beginning to feel more at his ease.

Ethel shook her head. "My knowledge of London is very limited indeed. I spent a fortnight there once with my aunts, but that is the only time I have been there. I was brought up in a small provincial town, and know very little of the world beyond its narrow limits."

"I hope Lady Pell intends making a long stay at the Chase," he presently ventured to remark, "as, in that case, we shall also have the pleasure of *your* society, Miss Thursby. It's precious dull here, I can tell you. My grandfather goes nowhere, and only by rare chance does a visitor find his way to the Chase. Of course one can get through the day pretty well, but the evenings are awful. Most nights grandad has his secretary fellow to play chess, or backgammon with him, and there's poor me left without a soul to talk to. It's something cruel, I can assure you."

There was quite a pathetic note in Luigi's voice as he spoke the last words. Having once begun to touch on the subject of his own imaginary grievances, he could be fluent enough.

"But no doubt you have resources within yourself, Mr. Clare, sufficient to cause the time not to hang too heavily on your hands. Books and music, for instance, and—and probably other things."

"I don't know so much about that, Miss Thursby. I'm not much of a reading man, not built that way, don't you know. And one can't be everlastingly jingling by oneself on the piano; besides, Sir Gilbert wouldn't stand it when he's deep in a game of chess. No; what I do is to get through an awful amount of yawning, mixed with a little bit of drawing, for which—the drawing, not the yawning—there are people who say I have something of a gift. All the same it's inf—uncommonly slow work, Miss Thursby, I give you my word."

"Is it asking too much to be allowed to see your drawings, Mr. Clare?" queried Ethel. "Not that I have the slightest pretension to set myself up as a critic," she made haste to add, "being all but destitute of technical knowledge, and only able to appreciate a work of art of any kind in so far as it satisfies my conceptions of the beautiful, or appeals to my sense of humour, or pathos, or teaches me something which I feel it is good for me that I should know."

Luigi felt that the conversation was getting a little beyond him, so he contented himself with saying: "Oh, my sketches are quite at your service, you know; but I give you my word that you will find them awful rubbish."

After dinner, the evening was so sunny and pleasant, that Sir Gilbert caused a couple of lounging chairs to be placed on the terrace, where he and Lady Pell stationed themselves, ostensibly to watch the sunset, but in reality that they might enjoy a *tête-à-tête* without any risk of being overheard by the young people. At dinner their talk had mostly concerned itself with reminiscences of people whom they had known when they were forty years younger.

Meanwhile, Ethel, with Luigi standing by her, his hands deep in his pockets, was going through the latter's portfolio of drawings.

"And now," said Lady Pell presently, settling herself in her chair with a comfortable conviction that she was about to listen to a most interesting recital, "and now, cousin Gilbert, for your chapter of

family romance. I confess that I am dying to hear the genuine version of the affair."

For a couple of minutes or so Sir Gilbert lay back with closed eyes, as if endeavouring to concentrate his thoughts on the task he had set himself to go through with. Then, in a low voice, slowly and hesitatingly at first, he began to tell that story with which the reader is already familiar. With some of its earlier incidents Lady Pell was acquainted; for instance, she knew that Alec Clare had left home in consequence of having quarrelled with his father about money matters, that, later on, he had settled in the United States, and there, some few years afterwards, had come to an untimely end. But the rest of Sir Gilbert's narrative, from the incident of the cutting off of the entail to his daughter-in-law's presentation of herself at the Chase, and his ultimate acknowledgment of his grandson, had for Lady Pell all the charm of novelty. She knew how much Sir Gilbert disliked being interrupted, and she listened to him in silence, but she caused him to feel that it was the silence of one who was deeply interested in all he had to tell her. Neither was she in a hurry to speak when at length he had come to an end.

Her first words were: "Thank you, cousin Gilbert." Then, after a momentary pause: "I appreciate to the full the confidence you have seen fit to repose in me, and I need scarcely tell you it will be as sacred with me as if it had been poured into the ear of a father confessor. Certainly your narrative is a most extraordinary one; but one has only to read 'The Romance of the Peerage' to discover that still stranger things, and all duly authenticated, are associated with the private histories of some of our oldest families. Still, with all due deference, I must say that in this Italian-looking grandson of yours, I am unable to find a single trait which helps to recall his father to my memory, if, indeed, poor Alec was his father."

Sir Gilbert gave vent to a little angry snort.

"Do you mean to imply, Louisa, that——"

Lady Pell laid a hand on his sleeve.

"I mean to imply nothing. I only hope that you sifted the evidence most thoroughly before bringing yourself to accept this young man as your dead son's offspring."

"What do you take me for, Louisa? There was no flaw in the evidence—none whatever."

Lady Pell tapped her teeth with her fan. "Do you know, Gilbert," she said, "that I felt quite grieved when one day in the *Times* obituary I came across a notice of the death of Mr. Page, your old adviser, whom I remember quite well. What a pity it is he did not live a few years longer."

The old man's shaggy brows came together for a moment, but that was the only notice he took.

"And this daughter-in-law of yours has gone back to Italy," continued her ladyship presently. "I should very much like to have seen her."

"You have only to extend your visit at the Chase in order to do so. I presume that Mrs. Clare will not be gone more than a month at the most."

Lady Pell shook her head. "I am only awaiting a letter from Madame de Bellecour in order to——"

At this juncture Luigi stepped out through the long window, and crossing to his grandfather, said: "Have you any objection, sir, to Miss Thursby playing the piano? If it will annoy you in the slightest degree, of course——"

"Not at all—not at all," broke in Sir Gilbert a little brusquely. "Let her play by all means. Why should it annoy me, eh?"

"Not a bit like poor Alec—not one little bit," remarked Lady Pell as if to herself; but, for a man of his years, Sir Gilbert's hearing was extraordinarily keen, and her words reached him.

His first impulse was to indulge in a little explosion, his second was to think better of it. After all, his cousin was merely enunciating a truth of which no one could be more unpleasantly conscious than he was; still, it is not always agreeable to have truths which we cannot deny, but would fain ignore, stated thus bluntly by another.

"And is it the boy's fault, Louisa, that he resembles in no way his father?" asked Sir Gilbert presently, but without any trace of irritability. "Which of us can help our looks?"

Lady Pell felt a touch of compunction. Without intending it, she had pricked her kinsman in a sore place. "Of course the young man is in no way to blame," she replied, "and it would be nonsense to impute any such meaning to my words. I could not help saying what I did because for hundreds of years back there has not been a Clare in the direct line whose features did not bear the unmistakable Clare stamp. If you dispute what I say, your own portrait gallery will suffice to convince you that I am right. But, as you are well aware, you can't dispute my dictum. Why, as far as features and expression go, you yourself are as like the Maurice Clare who fell at Marston Moor as one pea is like another. Still, as you justly observe, your grandson can in no way be held answerable for the misfortune of his looks, and if in other respects he fulfils your expectations, there's not a word more to be said."

There was a little space of silence; then, with a half sigh, Sir Gilbert said: "Between you and me, Louisa, that is just where the shoe pinches. Unfortunately, Lewis does *not* fulfil my expectations —far from it. But then, as I sometimes put it to myself, considering the way he was brought up, am I not asking more of him than I have any right to expect?"

"That certainly is a point of view which should not be lost sight of," responded her ladyship. "But what is it in particular that you complain of in him?"

"Oh, I am not complaining—nothing of the kind. I should not feel myself justified in doing so. It is simply that I am disappointed."

Then placing a hand lightly on her arm, he added: "My great fear is that I shall never succeed in making a gentleman of him."

"That would indeed be a misfortune. He would be the first Clare against whom such an allegation could be brought."

"Knowing, as I did," resumed Sir Gilbert, "(for, as far as I am aware, his mother hid nothing from me), the defects under which he laboured as regards his education and upbringing, I determined to have them remedied as far as it might be possible to do at this late time of day. Accordingly I arranged with the vicar of St. Michael's, an old Cambridge man, to do what he could in the way of introducing Lewis to some, at least, of the great writers of antiquity. Of course I knew it was too late to do much unless the boy took kindly to the vicar's teaching. I also engaged a man to give him riding lessons. Well, I waited till several weeks had gone by without making any inquiry as to the progress he was making. I did not want it to seem as if I were in anyway hurrying the boy. The other day, however, I made it my business to call both on the vicar and on Marsh, the livery-stable keeper. From both I heard the same story, reluctantly told, of incompetence and hopeless failure. 'He'll never look anything but a figure of fun on horseback, sir; he's no more nerve than a mouse,'—was Marsh's uncompromising verdict; and from the vicar I had no better a report. 'I am grieved to say that it is simply a waste of time and money to endeavour to impart even a smattering of classical knowledge to Mr. Clare,' was what he had to say to me."

"That must be excessively disheartening for you," remarked her ladyship in her most sympathetic tones.

"Disheartening indeed, Louisa; still, all that might be overlooked and forgiven him in consideration of his bringing up, but unfortunately he seems to have contracted a number of low tastes, and to be addicted to a class of company which cannot but tend to degrade him still further. Some men's weaknesses and shortcomings are accidents of their lives and are more or less curable, others seem as if they had been bred in the system and cannot be eradicated. I greatly fear that my grandson's failings belong to the latter category."

"It grieves me greatly that you should have cause to say this of one who ought to be the comfort and stay of your declining years."

"The necessity is indeed a grievous one; but it is a relief to have someone to unburden my mind to. It was not till the evening of the day before yesterday that sundry of Lewis's shortcomings were brought under my notice, of which I had hitherto been purposely kept in ignorance. It appears that Trant, my butler, has a nephew who is billiard marker at the *King's Head* hotel in Mapleford. The two had not seen each other for some months till they met the other day. Then the young man revealed to his uncle certain facts which the latter deemed it his duty at once to lay before me. It seems that on two or three afternoons in each week, presumably when his lessons are over at the vicarage, where he generally stays for luncheon,

Lewis finds his way to the billiard room in question, which at that hour of the day is frequented by a number of idle and fast young men, where he poses as the grandson of Sir Gilbert Clare, and the great man of the company, treating all who care to drink at his expense, in other words, everybody who happens to be there. Nor is that all. One revelation led to another, and a little questioning on my part elicited the fact that, for some weeks past, Lewis has been in the habit, after he was supposed to have retired for the night, of stealing out of the house by one of the back entrances and making his way to the saddle-room, where he and Snell, a groom whom I took into my service about a year ago (for I keep a couple of horses still, although I make very little use of them), are in the habit of hob-nobbing together over short pipes and whisky till long after midnight. Needless to say, Snell was packed off at a moment's notice, although I hold that he was by far the less blameworthy of the two."

"This is dreadful. Have you spoken to your grandson?"

"Not yet—not yet," answered Sir Gilbert a little wearily, "I have, perhaps weakly, delayed doing so. It is not merely a question of what I ought to say to him; that is a very simple matter—but of what I ought to do, in short, of what steps it behoves me to take in order to break him of his wretched propensities at once and for ever. That he will make me all sorts of fine promises I do not doubt, but can I trust his promises? I am afraid not. At the time he may fully intend to keep them, but the moment temptation comes in his way they will be powerless to restrain him. Of late I have made it my business to study him. He puzzled me at first, but after Trant's revelation—well, well!" He was silent and sat rubbing one hand slowly and softly within the other, a look of perplexity and distress clouding his grand old features. Then after a pause he added with an unwonted quaver in his voice: "He is my grandson and I cannot cast him adrift. To do so now, to relegate him to the position from which I raised him, would merely be to put a premium on his ruin."

To this Lady Pell apparently found nothing to reply.

For the last few minutes, the sound of music had reached them from the drawing-room, but now came a burst of song, so clear, so sweet, so penetrating, that they both listened, spell-bound. Not a word passed between them till the song had come to an end. Then Sir Gilbert said: "I have not enjoyed anything so much for a long time. Miss Thursby is not only possessed of an exquisite organ, but she has been taught how to use it to the best advantage. She sings with taste, *brio* and expression. In her, Louisa, you have evidently secured a treasure."

"She's a dear, good girl—which is far better than having an exquisite organ, as you term it—and if she were my own daughter I could scarcely love her more than I do."

"The sun has set, and the evening is growing chilly; suppose we go indoors. Miss Thursby must sing to us again."

Miss Thursby was only too pleased to find that her song had afforded Sir Gilbert so much pleasure, and, at his request, she sang again and again, Luigi standing by her meanwhile and turning over her music. A spell was upon him, under the influence of which he felt as if he scarcely knew himself. Emotions and feelings were at work within him to which he had heretofore been a stranger. He caught flying gleams of something higher and better than existence had yet revealed to him. He thought of "Miss J." and scorned himself for his fatuity.

Outside on the terrace it was grey dusk. The long windows were still wide open. A single lamp had been lighted in the drawing-room, which shone on the two figures at the piano. In the semi-obscurity which shrouded the rest of the room, sat Sir Gilbert and Lady Pell, dim figures faintly outlined. Miss Thursby, at Sir Gilbert's request, was singing "Robin Adair." She had just begun the second verse when all in the room were startled by three or four piercing shrieks following quickly on each other, and evidently proceeding from someone on the terrace. Ethel stopped singing on the moment and sprang to her feet, as did Lady Pell. Sir Gilbert, with surprising agility for a man of his years, made a dash for the open window, followed more leisurely by Luigi. But scarcely had the Baronet set foot on the terrace before a female figure almost literally stumbled into his arms. So taken aback was he that he could only splutter out: "What! what! Who are you? What's amiss?"

At the sound of his voice the girl—who was none other than Bessie Ogden, the under-housemaid—started back as if she had been shot, and although she was shaking in every limb and the pallor of her face was discernible through the dusk, she contrived to bob a little curtsey. "Oh, sir," she said, "I humbly beg your pardon. I had no idea it was you I run against, but I was so frightened that I quite lost my head."

"But what was it that frightened you?" demanded Sir Gilbert, who had recognised the girl, a little impatiently.

Then Bessie, half crying and still trembling from the shock she had undergone, contrived to tell her tale. It had been her "afternoon out," and in coming back she had taken a short cut across the terrace (which she had no business to do), and when opposite the drawing-room windows had been confronted by a tall, dark, hooded figure, which had appeared suddenly from behind a clump of evergreens, and, a few seconds later, had vanished as mysteriously as it had come.

By this time Trant and Mrs. Burton, followed by the rest of the servants, had appeared on the scene, drawn thither by Bessie's shrieks.

Sir Gilbert gave vent to an impatient snort. "Here, Mrs. Burton," he said in a tone of grave displeasure, "take this idiot away and give her a good talking to. If I hear any more of this nonsense she shall be sent about her business at a moment's notice."

Lady Pell, Ethel, and Luigi were standing together just outside the window.

"It is the Grey Brother whom the girl believes she has seen."

"And who *is* the Grey Brother, Lady Pell, if I may take the liberty of asking?" queried Luigi.

Lady Pell bit her lip. She had spoken aloud without intending to do so. "The Grey Brother, Mr. Clare, is the family spectre," she said behind her fan. "But not a word of this before your grandfather, unless you wish to have your head snapped off."

(*To be continued.*)

ATONEMENTS.

AMONG the most picturesque scenes in history are those in which some figure stands forth before a gaping crowd, doing penance for real or perhaps imagined crime. The beautiful Jane Shore walking for her sins in a white sheet, a lighted candle in her hand, while the spectators, overcome by the sight of so much beauty and so much sorrow, weep for sympathy. Henry II. going barefoot through the city of Canterbury to cast himself before the tomb of the murdered Becket and be scourged with knotted cords. Or the proud monarch, Henry IV. of Germany, standing in the depth of winter clad in hempen shirt, head and feet uncovered, in the frozen court-yard of the Pope's castle in Rome, waiting on the pardon of the haughty prelate, Gregory VII.

But yet more appealing to the imagination is the sight of one doing voluntary penance for some wrong of which the public wots nothing, but which haunts the perpetrator with an ever-present sense of guilt. There is no use, as the proverb says, in crying over spilt milk. Yet the human mind finds a certain satisfaction in making some atonement, however fanciful and unavailing it may seem to others, for wrong committed.

Johnson was the very sport of fools when he stood in the market-place of Uttoxeter hour after hour in the pouring rain, like another Lear, save that the penance was in retribution of a filial transgression on his own part of more than half a century before, and his own tender conscience was the Nemesis that drove him to it; it being on the spot where his father's stall used to stand, to which in his youthful pride he had once refused to attend him, that the old man thus exposed himself to the inclemency of the weather and the jeers of passers-by. "In contrition I stood," he said, with touching simplicity, "and I hope the penance was expiatory."

Almost as pathetic in its way was the filial atonement of Mrs. Carlyle. Having fallen out with her mother about a reckless expenditure of cakes and candles with which kind-hearted Mrs. Welch had frivolously furnished a banquet the Carlyles were giving on coming to London, and made the poor lady weep, the remorseful Jeanie reserved two of the wax candles, bought by her mother to illuminate the festive board, to serve as her own death-lights after seven and twenty years. "A strange, beautiful, sublime and almost terrible little action," as Carlyle comments on it, "silently resolved on, and kept silent from all the earth."

The natural casuistry of the human heart, as has been observed, grants dispensations more readily than the Church of Rome. But it

is not so when one has sinned against the object of one's affections and awakes to the consciousness of it too late.

Carlyle himself who, as a rule, was more given to bewailing his own sufferings at the hands of men and gods than to regretting his shortcomings toward others, was yet seized in his turn with the pangs of unavailing penitence and the gnawing desire to atone. "They may talk as they like," he had said in his grotesque self-pitying vein, "of the pangs of remorse, but why am I, Thomas Carlyle, who have never consciously hurt anyone, suffering like Judas Iscariot?"

When, however, the revelation broke upon him, in his late years, like a flash of lightning from heaven, as Froude says, that he had sacrificed his wife's health and happiness to his absorption in his work, and been selfishly disregardful of his obligations to her, his remorse, as his biographer attests, was agonising. And in token of it, whether in conscious or unconscious imitation of Dr. Johnson, whose act of expiation had taken strong hold of his imagination, "for many years after she had left him," says Froude, "when we passed the spot in our walks where she was last seen alive, he would bare his grey head in the wind and rain—his features wrung with unavailing sorrow."

Happy they who are startled into a realisation of love's duties in time to make atonement to the living, instead of waiting till death comes to reveal to them the depth of their love. "If thou wouldst be kind to thy beloved," says the awakened Carlyle, "be kind to-day. Better to bring a gleam of sunshine on the living face than for your tears to fall like rain upon the grave."

We are all haunted at times with a perception of life's shortness, its inadequacy for the expression of an infinite love. It will come, that haunting premonition when all our loved ones are around us, and for one moment we shall faintly realise what it would be if one of our heart's dearest were laid away in death. At the most unexpected moment, in solitude, in crowds, the well-springs of our affection will be troubled. The lightest touch will suffice to stir them; the smell of a flower, the waving of a tree's thin branches in the wind, the sight of a lovely moonlit sea, a strain of music the most commonplace, but with whose notes memory's sad minor accompaniment chimes in. We may dismiss the feeling, promising it indulgence at a more convenient season. For like the witch Hugh Miller tells of, who, by her magic art, was able to defer the pain of a bodily injury to some fixed future date, so life with its endless variety, its passing interests and duties, may postpone for a season the hour of our grief. But the time of reckoning will be sure to come, when with quivering nerves and lacerated heart we shall groan, as if in bodily pain, over our love's perished opportunities.

"When God forgiveth me," says old Richard Baxter, forgetting for the moment his theology in the human yearnings of his heart, "I cannot forgive myself, especially for my rash words and deeds by

which I have seemed less tender and kind than I should have been to my near and dear relations, whose love abundantly obliged me. When such are dead, though we never differed in point of interest or any other matter, every sour, or cross, or provoking word which I gave them maketh me almost irreconcilable to myself, and tells me how repentance brought some of old to pray to the dead whom they had wronged to forgive them, in the hurry of their passion."

P. W. Roose.

AT THE SPRING.

Together they stand at the spring, and the water runs over her pail,
(Heyday! she is only sixteen) and the prettiest lassie in Kent:
And he scarcely more than a lad, the carpenter's grandson, Tom Gale:
And O! they'd be married next year would her father but give his consent.
'Tis the spring of the year and their lives, and they hasten to answer Love's call:
(Heyday! she is only sixteen) and he the best lad of them all.

Midsummer all dusty and dry, and they stand by the spring as before,
(Heyday! she is sweet seventeen) he presses her soft little hand.
"Just tell me you love me, my sweet, I have loved you three summers and more;"
And the pitcher he carries tips over, and the water runs out in the sand.
O 'tis summer within and without, and their hearts are both loving and true:
(Heyday! she is sweet seventeen) and he need not have asked—for he knew.

Again they are down at the spring, and the Autumn-wind ruffles her hair—
(Heyday! she is nearly eighteen) and sorrow's first frost chills the air.
"O! to-day I must leave you, must go, love, my fortune in London to find;
Don't grieve for me, Mary, but take this half sixpence to keep me in mind."
And Tom and the sunshine are gone, and the tears hasten down her soft cheek:
(Heyday! she is nearly eighteen) and Jane Howick was married last week!

Cold winter is here, and the maiden goes down to the spring all alone:
(Heyday! she will soon be nineteen) a whole year has her lover been gone.
But the pitcher she carries drops down, for he stands at their tryst-place at last—
Tom himself!—and his dear arms are round her, and all the long waiting is passed.
And that laureate of Christmas, the robin, in the tree overhead sings, "No doubt
(Heyday! she will soon be nineteen) they'll be married before the year's out!"

Norah M'Cormick.

IF.

By Helen Prothero Lewis, Author of "Hooks of Steel," etc., etc.

"Much virtue in *if*."—*As You Like It.* Act. v. sc. iv.

"THEODORE, you must marry. I cannot allow you to moon about in this unsatisfactory way any longer. You have reached the age of thirty-five, yet here you are with no ties, no duties, no interests—no one to think of or spend your money upon save yourself. As a natural consequence you are miserable. You must take a wife."

"A wife might worry me."

"Then let her worry you. Surely anything is better than dull drifting."

"It is all very fine for you to talk, Pindar," said Theodore, in a slightly nettled tone, "but you've taken good care to steer clear of wives yourself. A bachelor of fifty hasn't much right to preach matrimony to men younger than himself—but that's the way with you parsons." Here the speaker broke off, the languor induced by an afternoon pipe triumphing over indignation. He stretched his legs a little further out, nestled his head a little deeper amidst the soft cushions of his armchair, and with an air of mild melancholy awaited the next utterance of his friend.

Mr. Theodore Vane was in one respect a much-to-be-envied person. At the age of twenty-four he had unexpectedly succeeded to an estate bringing in a clear seven thousand a year. No drawbacks accruing therefrom, not even a poor relation who could beseech a pension. An utter absence of relatives was perhaps the sole disadvantage under which his manhood suffered; there were none to control, none to direct, none even to advise with authority. So this favourite of fortune, young, rich, healthy, handsome, drifted to and fro like a spar on the sea, and none could tell what would be the end of him. A strange inability to keep long to any course was his. Everything had been tried—save matrimony—and everything had been cast aside as not worth pursuing. His last experiment had been foreign travel, and in Switzerland he had come across the Rev. Paul Pindar, Rector of St. Gabriel's, Stainbourne, Hants, a man who had visited at his father's vicarage in the old days. Mr. Pindar was of a very different type to the motiveless Theodore; nevertheless, the two became friends. The memory of the old days was a bond between; the clergyman felt that this drifting spar should be brought into harbour if possible, and that it was only right the hand of an old friend should point the way.

Theodore was now visiting his new-found friend for the first time. Host and guest formed a contrast as they sat facing each other in the bay-window of the Rectory dining-room. The clergyman was broad and athletic in figure, had strong, well-cut features, a clean-shaven face, and a marked air of distinction. At the first glance it was perceivable he was a gentleman, and when he spoke, his extremely refined utterance strengthened the conviction. Theodore was indisputably handsome; embodied in marble his profile would have been perfect, but despite blue eyes and a fine head of curling chestnut hair, a weak and somewhat peevish expression marred him as a living being. His figure too spoke of weakness; he stooped, and his general air lacked the distinction so observable in his friend.

The two had but lately returned from lunching at a house in the neighbourhood, "The Grove," occupied by Mrs. Hooker, a widow with four daughters. The four Miss Hookers were all pretty, all unmarried, and all at home. The sight of so much unwedded charm had no doubt prompted Mr. Pindar to make the foregoing remarks to his eligible friend. A short silence now fell between the pair. Theodore's last observations had touched some long silent chord in the elderly clergyman's heart; he flushed, and seemed to find it difficult to frame his reply.

"At fifty a man's life lies behind him, Theodore," he observed at length, "and I own that mine has been full of grievous mistakes. You at thirty-five can still be said to have your life before you, and I should be sorry to think that the day could ever come when you would feel as I often feel now, that the hearth is very desolate, and the heart very empty."

"Well, if it comes to that, a man can marry even at fifty. Some one the same age, you see, or possibly younger. There are always women thankful to marry anybody—at least—I don't mean that you're anybody of course——"

"I am quite aware of that, my boy," interrupted Mr. Pindar, with a good-humoured smile, "I know I'm nobody. Unfortunately a nobody of fifty who does not rejoice in a big income has not much pick and choice, and I fear I am a little fastidious where women are concerned. I cannot reasonably expect any young and charming woman to marry me; and"—here he gave a little laugh—"I don't think I could bring myself to marry an old and unattractive one."

"Ha! Ha!" laughed Theodore, roused into actual amusement. "Imagine it! Cat on the hearth, spectacles, knitting, squeaks of pain from rheumatism—not quite up to that yet, eh! Mr. Paul Pindar? Well, I suppose I am still entitled to choose from the young, but I'm so awfully afraid of choosing the wrong woman. If I could only be sure of marrying the right one, I'd marry to-morrow."

"Now attend to me, Theodore. Seriously speaking, I have shown you this afternoon as pretty, nice, well brought-up girls as can be found in any English county. All different styles, and each in her

own style admirable. Now there's Mary, the second girl, only twenty-six, a thoroughly kind-hearted, good-natured creature, full of energy and spirits, brimming over with health, and such lovely hair and complexion."

"Ah! but she's too fat. And almost too rosy. If she were thinner now, and a trifle less highly coloured."

"Then what do you say to Lizzie, the third one? A really clever girl, and most accomplished. And such vivacity. You could never feel dull with so lively a creature in the house. She has her fair share of good looks, too; no man need feel ashamed of seeing her at the head of his table."

"Yes, but she's very thin, and she talks in almost too sharp a way. If she were a trifle fatter, now, and——"

"Ah! well, there's still Daisy. She is a beauty. No man with eyes in his head can deny that. In a year or two she will be superb. But she's rather young, perhaps, only eighteen, a great gap between her and Lizzie."

"Oh yes, she's too young. Besides, she might be rude. I saw her very rude to Lizzie once this afternoon."

"Lizzie tries her a little hardly sometimes. I have personally a strong penchant for Daisy. There is a great deal of good material in the little girl. It is a little trying to her no doubt to have so many elder sisters."

"Yes," laughed Theodore, "all bent on keeping the beauty in the background until they've disposed of their own charms. I wonder that eldest one, Veronica, has never married. To my mind she is the most attractive-looking one of the lot."

"Oh, incomparably!" exclaimed Mr. Pindar, with so much energy that Theodore looked quite impressed.

"Oh, you think so too, do you?" he said, then gave himself up to silent reflection for a moment or two. "Yes," he presently went on, "a very attractive woman. A pretty name; Veronica! Veronica; sounds like Desdemona, somehow. She's a good figure—very good taste in dress I should say—and charming manner, certainly charming manner—sweet sort of face too. If only she were a bit younger now."

"Oh, she's decidedly too old for you; most unsuitable," said Mr. Pindar, getting up, and knocking the ashes rather violently out of his pipe. "She is Mrs. Hooker's step-daughter, belongs to a first family, must be quite your own age. The younger ones would suit you better than Veronica."

"I don't know that they would," said Theodore perversely. "Why shouldn't a man marry a woman his own age? You're very likely to have the same tastes, like the same things, if you're the same age. Now, when a man of thirty-five marries quite a young girl, he's seen everything and done everything, and she wants to see everything and do everything; then rows begin about seeing and doing everything,

and it all ends badly. Newspapers full of that sort of thing; read a case of that kind only the other day. I liked that girl Veronica. She looks nice on a lawn, and there is a good deal of lawn down at my place."

Mr. Pindar looked annoyed. "I am of Shakespeare's opinion," he said:

> "'Let still the woman take
> An elder than herself: so wears she to him,
> So sways she level in her husband's heart.'"

"I can't think why she has never married," went on Theodore, with unaffected indifference to Shakespeare; "do you happen to know?"

"I have never sought to find out Miss Hooker's private affairs," replied Mr. Pindar, rising and speaking very stiffly, "and even if I had been confided in I should not dream of making them the subject of idle discussion."

It would have been evident to most people that he was getting irritated, but Theodore was a little obtuse of perception. "One thing I noticed," he went on calmly, "she has uncommonly pretty feet. Did you ever notice her feet, Pindar?"

"I am not in the habit of noticing ladies' feet," replied Mr. Pindar a little sharply.

"Oh, you parsons!" exclaimed Theodore with an incredulous chuckle.

"Excuse me," said Mr. Pindar with an impatient movement, "but I have an hour's work I must do before dinner. Perhaps you'll take a stroll meanwhile."

"Oh, I'm all right, don't distress yourself about me. I'll have another smoke. So nice in this arm-chair with sun streaming in and bees humming outside. I'll just imagine I'm at home, with Veronica as my wife; and if it seems pleasant—— Good heavens! what a bang! Can't the man shut a door quietly after him?"

Ten days later, Mrs. Hooker gave a garden-party to which she invited all the chief families in the neighbourhood, the Rector and his friend being naturally included. There was great excitement at the Grove on the day of the event. No pains were spared to make the house and grounds look their very best, and when the girls came down ready dressed at four o'clock it was evident they had spared no pains on themselves. Mrs. Hooker looked at them with pardonable pride when she joined them on the lawn.

"You all look very nice," she said approvingly. "I don't know when you have looked so well, Mary; that new dress is most becoming. I am glad you are wearing white, Lizzie and Daisy; I do like young people in white. I'm very fond of that soft mauve dress of yours, Veronica, though it's not new. It makes you look younger than anything else you wear."

The younger girls beamed, but Veronica winced as though there were some hidden sting in her step-mother's words.

"I wonder whether Mr. Pindar and his friend will come late or early," went on Mrs. Hooker, settling her matronly form in a large garden-chair.

The girls looked embarrassed for a moment. Not one of them would have confessed it, but all had a guilty consciousness the garden-party had been given by their mother solely for the sake of Mr. Pindar's eligible friend. Mary spoke first.

"Oh, they'll come some time," she remarked, with a great assumption of carelessness.

"Really, Mary, how clever of you to know that!" exclaimed Lizzie pertly. "Was it natural intuition which led you to the knowledge or intense study of the probabilities?"

"You're both equally anxious on the subject, anyway," remarked Daisy.

"Little girls should be seen and not heard," rejoined Lizzie sharply. Daisy was ready with an equally sharp retort, but Mrs. Hooker interfered.

"Now, girls, no squabbling!" she said authoritatively. "Mary, remember Mr. Vane plays tennis with you against Mr. Paget and Lizzie, on the best court. You two had better go and see if the net is all right."

"I don't see why I should be marked off beforehand for Mr. Paget," said Lizzie, discontentedly to her sister, as they walked off to the tennis court. "Mr. Vane might be allowed to choose his own partner."

"Never mind, we shall be all playing together," remarked the good-natured Mary; "and really it is just as well to arrange everything for Mr. Vane, for he never seems able to decide anything for himself."

Mrs. Hooker next sent Daisy to rearrange the position of some chairs and rugs, and then she turned to Veronica and said—

"Don't you think Mary looks remarkably well this afternoon?"

"Yes, I do," replied Veronica, pleasantly; "blue suits her complexion so admirably. But I always admire Mary, she is so bonnie-looking."

"I think Mr. Vane decidedly admires her," went on the complacent mother; "has it struck you so? He has been here so much this last week, scarcely an afternoon that he has not strolled up."

"Yes, he has been here a good deal," said Veronica; "but so far his attentions seem to me to have been equally divided."

"I don't agree with you. The day before yesterday he showed most attention to Mary."

"And the time before that to Lizzie," remarked Veronica quietly.

"And yesterday to you, Veronica," put in Daisy, who had returned.

"Ah, that reminds me! I want to give you a little hint, Veronica," went on Mrs. Hooker, "and you are such a sensible woman, I am

sure you will take it in good part. You may not choose to allow it, but I do think Mr. Vane particularly admires Mary. And yesterday I noticed once or twice that you detained him talking when I felt sure he would have been glad of an excuse to join Mary. With your tact you could so easily have given him the chance."

"You are mistaken, mother," answered Veronica. "I am incapable of detaining a man by my side against his will. Whatever conversation Mr. Vane has had with me has been of his own seeking; and if he has at any time stayed long talking to me he has done so not from necessity, but from inclination."

There was a deep flush on Veronica's face as she spoke, but her manner was full of dignity. Mrs. Hooker looked up at the tall graceful figure standing so erect by her side, and felt a little small. Veronica was only a penniless step-daughter, often felt to be *de trop* in the house; nevertheless she compelled from the family much unwilling admiration and respect.

"Oh, my dear, I was not blaming you, or insinuating anything, of course," exclaimed Mrs. Hooker half apologetically, "only you know, you being the age you are—I mean, Mr. Vane being comparatively a young man—of course, though gentlemen always like talking to you so much—he could not regard you as—as—well, he might possibly think of Mary *as a wife*, and it would be such a good thing for her, you see."

"I quite see. Pray don't trouble to say more, mother," said Veronica, moving away, now looking very pale.

"I hope no one will talk to me like that when I am thirty-five!" said Daisy looking indignantly at her mother.

The remark was unheeded, for at that moment Mr. Pindar and Mr. Vane came suddenly into view. They were crossing the lawn in the direction Veronica had just taken. For a second Veronica half turned aside as though wishful to escape them, but she was given no choice in the matter. Perceiving her near, the gentlemen instantly bore down upon her. A few conventional remarks were exchanged, then the guests moved on to greet Mrs. Hooker.

"Miss Veronica does not look so nice to-day as she did yesterday," observed Theodore to his companion as they moved forward. "She looks old, has a pale, worn sort of appearance, don't you think?" He spoke in quite a disappointed tone.

Mr. Pindar made no reply. He had noticed what the younger man had failed to see: a glitter as of half-suppressed tears in the eyes of the woman who had just greeted him. And the sight had moved him deeply.

It was generally conceded afterwards that Mrs. Hooker's garden-party had been the pleasantest of the season. Mr. Pindar's was the only dissentient voice. He said he had found it spiritless and dull, and he and Theodore had almost a dispute on the point at luncheon the following day.

"I must say I thought it uncommonly well done," said Theodore, "and I don't know when I have enjoyed myself so much. Nice band, capital refreshments, and some rattling good sets of tennis. By jove, that second Hooker girl, Mary, plays well. And didn't she look nice? There were a good many pretty girls there, but not one came up to Mary, yesterday. An uncommonly handsome girl, I call her. I admired Veronica most the other day, but she looked quite faded yesterday; was dull and uninteresting too when one talked to her. Oh, she's not in it."

"Miss Hooker was not herself yesterday. She is neither dull nor uninteresting," asserted Mr. Pindar with some warmth.

"No; I think there was something wrong. She was depressed; seemed to avoid us, I fancied. Give me a girl that's always jolly. Now I should say Mary was always jolly. 'Pon my word, I think a fellow might go further and fare worse. You are always advising me to marry, Pindar; say the word now. Shall I make the plunge?"

"With Mary?"

"With Mary."

"My dear boy," exclaimed the rector jumping up and clapping his friend delightedly on the shoulder, "you couldn't take a step that would please me more. Mary is the very girl for you, and I feel strongly that you would be both a better and a happier man if you were married. Do it by all means. Take my advice, go up to the Grove and propose before another twelve hours is over your head, and my blessing and best wishes go with you." Theodore looked impressed. It was evident the Rector was genuinely pleased and absolutely sincere in all he had just said.

"You are a good fellow, Pindar," said he; "I'm glad to have your good wishes. I'll go up there this very afternoon and I'll come back engaged to Mary."

"Mary's consent is evidently a foregone conclusion," remarked Mr. Pindar with an amused smile.

Theodore laughed, a comfortable laugh, such as only a man with seven thousand a year could give on the eve of a proposal.

"Do you think this coat's good enough to go up in?" he asked, rising and surveying himself in the mirror over the mantel-piece.

"Quite," said the Rector, looking with an indulgent expression at the faultlessly cut face of his guest; "I don't think Phillida will flout you. A rosebud in the buttonhole might perhaps lend an air of sentiment—there are several in the garden."

"No, I don't think I'll wear a rosebud. Might like to ask for one up there; something to say, you know, if there's an awkward pause. I wonder if proposing is awkward? Oh, I say, Pindar, I think I'd better be off or I might change my mind."

Mr. Pindar jumped up, found Theodore's hat, presented him with it, and fairly pushed him out of the house. And so the young man started to propose to Mary.

Very late in the evening he returned. Mr. Pindar came out into the lighted hall to greet him.

"Well," he said, "good news? But I need hardly ask. A rejected man would scarcely have stayed to dinner. By-the-bye though—did you propose?"

"Oh yes, I proposed."

"Accepted?"

"Yes, accepted," replied Theodore looking very low.

Strangely enough, Mr. Pindar, usually so observant, did not notice his guest's depressed manner. He was looking very excited himself.

"That's right," he said, taking Theodore's arm and leading him into his study. "I wish you joy, my dear fellow, from the bottom of my heart. But I have not a doubt of your happiness. And now let me give you a piece of news about myself; most delightful news; I can scarcely believe in my own good fortune. You know how harassed I have heretofore been as to ways and means, with my tiny income and this poor living. You know also that a distant cousin of mine, Joseph Pindar, died the other day. Well, it seems he had quarrelled with his nearest relative, a ne'er-do-weel nephew, and just before his death he made a will and left his whole fortune to me. Fifteen hundred a year and a coal-mine that will make a rich man of me before long. What do you say to that?"

"Very glad to hear it, I'm sure. Congratulate you heartily."

"Yes, we can congratulate each other now. Quite a red-letter-day this. Let me tell you, Vane, that this money means more than mere wealth to me. It opens to me a chance of happiness which I have scarcely dared to dream of before. This desolate hearth of mine may now—but no, I will not let even my thoughts dwell on it yet. Besides, joy is making me selfish. Tell me, was the fair Mary taken by surprise?"

"It isn't Mary," remarked Theodore, sitting down languidly in an arm-chair.

"Not Mary! Then in the name of heaven who is it? Not—not—man—speak! Who is it then?"

"It is Veronica."

With a gasp the Rector fell into the arm-chair facing his guest's. "Tell me, tell me!" he said huskily; "I don't understand, I thought you went up to propose to Mary."

"So I did, but somehow she turned into Veronica."

"Explain, explain; I can't take it in."

Rather ramblingly the young man explained how the change in the young lady had come about. There was an uncomfortable silence when he had finished his narration.

"Well, don't you congratulate me?" said Theodore a little moodily.

Mr. Pindar gave a bitter laugh. "Congratulate you!" he said, "congratulate the man who has put out his hand to gather a peony,

then capriciously snaps off an exquisite lily. How about the poor lily? No, I can't congratulate you to-night; I am bewildered, unhinged. This affair of the money has unsettled me—unsettled me."

"What a funny man you are," said Theodore, looking with a puzzled expression at his friend; "you were delighted about the money a moment ago."

"Yes, but I see now it has come a little late."

"You needn't look at it in that light. A man can enjoy life even at fifty. I must say, Pindar, considering how you egged me on to do this thing, you might give me a little more sympathy."

"I never egged you on to do this thing," said Mr. Pindar sharply; "I encouraged you under the impression you meant to marry Mary."

"So I did. The only difference is that I'm going to marry Veronica. Same family, comes to much the same thing, as far as you are concerned. Anyway, it's done now, and I feel quite hurt you should take it in this manner. The whole way home I thought, 'How pleased Pindar will be.' Upon my word, I doubt if I have one sincere friend in the world."

Theodore's last words seemed to touch the Rector. With an effort he recovered his outward serenity.

"Don't think that," he said, rising and placing his hand on the younger man's shoulder. "I am, or at least I try to be, a sincere friend. I will congratulate you; I do congratulate you, most heartily. But remember one thing, Vane: you have unexpectedly come into possession of an inestimable treasure. Veronica is—is—an ideal woman."

Theodore looked much impressed, and his opinion of his newly-gained lady-love went up like a rocket.

"She is also," pursued the Rector, "a tender, delicate creature who feels acutely. If I thought you would play fast and loose with her before marriage, or give her a day's unhappiness afterwards, I would —I would kick you out of my house."

Theodore laughed at the absurd threat.

"You'll never have occasion to do that," he said. "I shall not have much time to play fast and loose, for we are to be married the end of August, only two months hence! And it will be her fault if she is not happy afterwards, for she will have her own way as much as she likes. Woodleigh Manor will have to be done up a bit. Sit down, do, and let's have a talk about it."

Mr. Pindar sat down, trying to look as if he liked it. And here we will leave them, in order to relate how it came to pass that Veronica, not Mary, was chosen to become Mrs. Vane of Woodleigh Manor.

Theodore's arrival that afternoon at the Grove had been utterly unexpected. The drawing-room into which he was shown was very disordered, and as he entered by one door he could see the tail of a white dress whisking through another, at the further end. The butler

announced his name to this tail, and Theodore had time to observe that it was both soiled and crumpled.

"Daisy, I expect," he muttered to himself; "Mary is always spick and span."

He was wrong. It was Mary escaping from visitors. She had not expected any the very day after a garden-party, and on what she considered "safe" afternoons was apt to degenerate into untidiness. To-day she was giving her hair "a rest," which meant that she had not curled her fringe, and had twisted the back hair up loosely anyhow. Also she was giving some old slippers a turn, and a soiled dress one extra wear before it went to the wash-tub. Naturally, therefore, she ran for her life when she heard a visitor coming. The door through which she escaped opened upon some steps which led down into the garden. Across the lawn she flew, and near some laurel bushes she found Veronica gathering flowers for the dinner-table.

"Oh, Veronica, do go in!" she exclaimed breathlessly. "Visitors! Had no time to see who! I am too untidy to go and entertain anybody, and mamma and the girls are out. I couldn't get tidy and do my hair under half an hour. Do go in at once. Oh! Oh! How awful! Smithson's bringing them out here to us! What an idiot the man is! Veronica! It's Mr. Vane! I should like the earth to open and swallow me up. What will he think of me? Why, I've no waistbelt! My fingers are inky. Veronica, what *shall* I do?"

"Never mind," said Veronica kindly, "very likely he will not notice. Men are never quick at taking in details. I will ask him to come round and see the flowers, and then you can escape and change your dress, and join us later."

There was no time for more. Mr. Vane was upon them. He shook hands with Veronica, glanced at her carelessly, then, as though his attention had been arrested, looked again at her lingeringly and admiringly. Veronica was never untidy. To-day she was wearing a very neat dress of softest grey; on her carefully dressed head was a picturesque garden hat; tucked into the bosom of her dress were some freshly-gathered pink and white roses, and in her hands she held a large nosegay of garden flowers. Everything about her was fresh and dainty, and she made a pretty picture as she stood before the visitor, a background of green laurel throwing into strong relief the graceful lines of her figure, and her flowers glowing brightly against the soft grey of her dress. From this pretty picture Theodore rather slowly turned to greet Mary. Alas, poor Mary! She was looking her worst. White is most charming wear for a girl, but there are two things essential to its charm. It must be fresh, and it must be worn by a slight figure. A soiled, crumpled white gown on a stout figure is an eyesore, and so thought Mr. Vane as his eye travelled down Mary's very plump form, and rested upon and recognised the dirty skirt he had seen whisking through the doorway. Men sometimes do notice details, notwithstanding Veronica's kind assertion to the contrary, and

before Mary could get away the visitor had taken in every detail, from the uncurled fringe, to the shabby slipper. Mary was conscious of his exhaustive survey, and her cheeks burned painfully. It was unbecoming to her to get flushed. Her complexion, always brilliant, became too roseate at such times. So embarrassed did she grow she could hardly talk; her manner, her very attitude, grew constrained and awkward. It was an intense relief to her when Veronica said pleasantly:

"Mr. Vane, do come and see our conservatory; we are very proud of our flowers. By-the-bye, Mary, do you much mind telling Smithson we'll have tea on the lawn."

Mary ran away with a heart like lead. "Why, oh why, didn't I dress for visitors!" she exclaimed in the privacy of her bedroom.

Then she tore off the soiled white dress and flung it on the floor, apostrophising it as a "hateful thing." Well might she thus apostrophise it, for it had cost her seven thousand a year. Mr. Vane had made up his mind even before the objectionable dress had disappeared from view. "No, thank you," he said to himself as he strolled by Veronica's side to the conservatory. "A slovenly girl won't suit me. Fancy bringing a man friend unexpectedly into your house, and seeing your wife whisking away through doorways because she has a dirty gown on, and is too untidy to be seen!"

The conservatory proved very interesting. Veronica loved flowers, and never showed to such advantage as when amidst them. As she moved to and fro amongst the plants, daintily touching a blossom here and there, and explaining their respective characteristics and merits, Mr. Vane, who followed her closely, grew quite enamoured, and each moment thought her more and more charming. When at length she proposed a move, she found him unwilling to depart from the conservatory. Reflecting that Mary might not even yet be quite ready she settled herself for a few moments in a leaning position near the open door, still holding her flowers in her hands. An arching branch of blossoming wisteria hung over her head, her attitude was gracefully careless, and the consciousness that it was her bounden duty to entertain this young man a little longer, gave her manner a frank ease, seldom observable in her when in the presence of her mother and sisters. She talked for a little while as though enjoying herself thoroughly, then said with almost a girlish laugh:

"How remiss I am! I have been proudly showing you all our flowers, but have never offered you even a bud."

Theodore felt glad at that moment that he had not accepted the Rector's offer of a rosebud. Utterly forgetting Mary's existence, he pressed close up to Veronica's side, and looking at her very tenderly said: "Give me one of those sweet white roses in the front of your dress."

Rather shyly, for his sudden change of manner had taken her by surprise, she detached a rose and gave it him. He took it, also the

hand that offered it, and with a deep blush Veronica looked up at him. Her eyes were pretty and soft, and a blush was very becoming to her somewhat pale face. For the moment she looked a young girl.

Suddenly, before she could realise what was happening, she found herself receiving a proposal. In her confusion and astonishment her first impulse was to refuse it.

"Oh no!" she exclaimed, drawing back tremblingly, "it is impossible. You cannot think of me in that way."

This little demur on her part acted as a fillip to Theodore. His ardour increased on the spot, and so fervent did he become, and so vehemently did he press his cause, Veronica at length could not but believe his happiness hung upon her answer.

"You really love me?" she asked, looking wistfully up at him.

Theodore's answer was absolutely impassioned.

Veronica's eyes wandered out to the lawn. For years she had had an empty feeling in her heart. For years she had longed for that greatest of all good gifts, the true love of a good man. The lover of her youth had died, the lover of her womanhood had so far lived only in her dreams, but never had she pictured him like Mr. Vane. The dream-lover was older, more cultivated, a man of stronger character and finer mould. But he still lurked vaguely in dreamland, and here was a flesh and blood lover at her feet. Should she—should she not—oh should she—take him?

Round the corner came suddenly the clatter of tea-cups and the high voices of girls. Tea had appeared on the lawn, and with it the family—Veronica's step-mother and step-sisters. None of them gave her much love, all of them would be glad to have her out of the way. Here, close to her side, was the only man who had offered to take her away since the lover of her youth had died; possibly no one might ever again make to her such a proposal. If she refused this chance she might remain at the Grove — unloved, unwanted — to the end.

Again Mr. Theodore Vane pressed his suit. A quarter of an hour later he joined the tea-party on the lawn, an accepted lover.

Veronica could not face the family. She went straight to her room, and left her *fiancé* to break the news over the tea-table. He executed the task very bunglingly. For some time he could not make either mother or daughters understand, and when at last he did force the truth upon their comprehension he was quite disconcerted by the manner in which they received the news. They were at first too amazed for anything but silence, and their congratulations, when at last given, were cold in the extreme. Nothing could have been flatter. Theodore's spirits sank steadily as tea progressed; he noticed that Mary was now faultlessly attired, and looking rather pale and unusually pretty, and with a faint pang of fear he began to wonder whether, after all, he could have made a mistake. A remark Mrs. Hooker had made rankled unpleasantly in his mind.

"We can't help being surprised," she had said, "for somehow we had got into a way of regarding Veronica as quite a confirmed spinster, and you seem so young."

It annoyed him to think that anyone could speak of the girl—no, he realised he could not use the term girl—the lady he had just proposed to, as a "confirmed spinster." It meant nothing more or less than an "old maid." Just a polite way of saying "old maid." Not pleasant to hear one's *fiancée* called "an old maid," however politely it might be put.

"If only she had been a few years younger," he said to himself, looking half regretfully at the now spick-and-span Mary.

Of course he stayed to dinner. Mrs. Hooker could scarcely do less than ask him; under the circumstances, he could scarcely do less than remain. But the evening was not a success. Mrs. Hooker and the girls were dull. Veronica wore a pretty dress, but she looked pale, her manner was constrained, the frank, almost girlish gaiety, which had characterised it when alone with Theodore had left her, she was not the charming Veronica of the conservatory. Had Theodore known of the very trying moments she had gone through with the family before dinner, possibly unfavourable criticism would have changed into tender sympathy. I say possibly, for no one could prophesy the course Theodore's mind would take with any assurance.

The girls had rushed up into Veronica's room as soon as the tea hour was over.

"Well, Veronica! I never thought before that you were so deep," exclaimed Mary indignantly.

"Deep!" cried Veronica, drawing herself up a little haughtily; "I don't understand you, Mary; how have I been deep?"

"You can't deny that you kept it all very dark," said Lizzie, also indignantly. "And all the time you tried to give us to understand that you knew he preferred us—preferred Mary, I mean, and that you were doing your best to leave the coast clear for her."

"Until to-day, Lizzie, I was as ignorant as you as to what Mr. Vane's intentions might be."

"Of course she was," chimed in Daisy. "What are you accusing her like this for? Mr. Vane has unexpectedly chosen her, and there's an end to it."

"Go away, Daisy, or else hold your tongue," said Lizzie angrily.

"Shan't," said Daisy. She was the only one in the family who understood Veronica at all, and something in her step-sister's pale disturbed face made her determined to stay, and if need be, champion her on this trying occasion.

"What's this? What this?" cried Mrs. Hooker rustling into the room. "Daisy, I often hear you speaking rudely to your sisters, you should remember they are older than you are. Dear me, Veronica, Mr. Vane certainly has taken us by surprise! We should never ourselves have thought of such a match as suitable. So young a man!"

"He is exactly my own age, mother," put in Veronica, turning her face a little aside, and playing with the things on the toilet-table.

"Oh, indeed! I should never have thought that. However, it is a very good match from a pecuniary point of view, which no doubt has weighed with you."

"No," said Veronica in a low tone, "it was not the thought of his money which weighed with me."

Lizzie gave a little incredulous laugh.

"He certainly did behave at one time as if it were Mary he had a fancy for," went on Mrs. Hooker, "and I cannot understand what made him veer round to you so suddenly. I hope he knows his own mind, and will be faithful to you. You were of course quite justified in taking him at his word, for chances don't come often, once a girl has passed her youth. I really hope you may be very happy."

Then to the astonishment of the family, the usually self-contained Veronica turned upon them a face streaming with tears.

"Oh," she said passionately, "I do hope I may be happy. I do pray I may at last find love and happiness. I have longed for it so long, so very long. Can you not understand, all of you, that it is not the money, or the mere fact of marrying, but it is the home of my own—the love—that I need? Girls, have none of you one kind word for me at such a time?"

Daisy sprang forward and gave her a warm embrace, tears in her own beautiful eyes. The elder girls also came near and kissed her, and looking rather shamefaced, tried to offer hearty congratulations. They were all touched by the sight of Veronica's emotion; though selfish, they were not bad at heart. For a moment Mrs. Hooker looked half inclined to take offence.

"Really, Veronica! You talk as if we had not made you happy here," she said.

Then better feelings prevailed, and she too went up to Veronica and kissed her.

So the little scene ended better than it began. But strong emotion leaves its mark behind it, and this mark was written in pale unbecoming characters on Veronica's face when she sat down to the dinner-table by the side of her critical lover.

Late that night Daisy stole into her step-sister's room. Veronica was in bed and the room was dark.

"Veronica, are you awake?" she asked softly.

"Yes, Daisy dear; what is it?"

"I wanted to come and talk to you. I feel that we have not made you so happy here as we might have done. We, who are the real interlopers in this home. Have you done this, Veronica, to get away from us, or do you really love Mr. Vane?"

For a moment Veronica lay silent in the darkness. "Don't ask such very searching questions, Daisy dear," she said at length faintly.

"Well, let me say one thing. Don't marry Mr. Vane unless you

are sure he will make you happy. Somehow I don't feel as if he were the right man for you. In spite of his money and his handsome face, he is not good enough for you. Vera dear, if you change your mind and think you'd like to stay on here better than to marry Mr. Vane, remember one thing—and this is what I came to say: I shall always, always, be nice to you in future."

"Dear Daisy, you have seldom been anything but nice, and I shall not change my mind."

"You know, Vera," went on Daisy a little nervously as though not sure of her ground, "I have always had a sort of feeling that Mr. Pindar would like to have you for his wife."

"Mr. Pindar! I never thought of him! I do not believe he has ever thought of me, in that way. He is not a marrying man. He has always said plainly he cannot afford to marry."

"All the same, he is in love with you," said Daisy, speaking now with more confidence. "Oh, the bright eye of a Daisy is very sharp. Now, he *is* a gentleman!"

"Do you mean to imply that Mr. Vane is not?" asked Veronica uneasily.

"Oh no! of course he's one, by birth and all that. I mean—*in himself*, he can't compare with Mr. Pindar as a gentleman."

Again Veronica lay silent in the dark. She may in her heart have recognised the truth of her young sister's criticisms, but she did not choose to say so. Her silence made Daisy feel she must say nothing more either in the shape of remonstrance or suggestion. So with the versatility of youth she began to discuss the coming wedding, and dilated on the pleasure it would give her to come and stay with Veronica when she was married. The frivolous element she thus introduced did Veronica good, and made her forget for the time being some misgivings, which, unknown to everyone, she shared in common with Daisy. Her young sister left her happier than she found her.

Theodore stayed a week with Mr. Pindar in the character of an engaged man. Daily visits were paid by him to his lady-love. His behaviour during these visits was not altogether satisfactory; in fact it excited much comment from the family. With a new-born kindness, though, they forbore to make their comments in Veronica's presence. No one could have failed to observe that as a lover Theodore was variable. Sometimes he was very attentive, at others almost neglectful, devoting himself to the younger girls, as if he found the change from Veronica to them refreshing. Veronica bore this occasional neglect with a good deal of quiet dignity. It must have mortified her to find that her lover could attach himself to a sister for a whole afternoon, and almost ignore her presence, but no word expressive of mortification ever escaped her lips.

At the end of a week Theodore began to get restless, and said he must really go and see about furbishing up Woodleigh Manor for the

reception of his bride. So, escorted by Mr. Pindar, he walked up to the Grove one morning to bid them all farewell. The Hooker family came *en masse* into the drawing-room to see them, and Theodore was particularly agreeable and lively, his good spirits under the circumstances taking everyone a little by surprise. He quite monopolised the conversation, and descanted at great length on all he intended to do at Woodleigh Manor. Of course he should write to Veronica every day, and in a month's time he hoped to run up and pay her a short visit. Then when the date fixed for the marriage drew near he should come to the *Stainbourne Arms* with his best man, and Pindar, like the brick he was, had promised to put up one or two friends who might like to be present at the ceremony. So he ran on, and the family sat and smiled, and Veronica listened with burning cheeks, and seemed to find the publicity of the affair a little trying.

"We won't have a grand wedding, I think, Veronica?" remarked Theodore at length, for the first time addressing his lady-love particularly.

"Certainly not, if you prefer a quiet one," answered Veronica colouring still more deeply, and looking very embarrassed. Mr. Pindar glanced curiously at her, then turned his eyes quickly away as though the sight pained him.

"Yes, I think I prefer a quiet one. A fuss and a crowd of people detract from the solemnity of the occasion, don't you think?"

Lizzie gave a faint derisive sounding little sniff and looked at Mary, who gave a tiny but intelligent sniff in reply.

Theodore went on regardless of sniffs. "We'll have the immediate relations and friends, a nice friendly little breakfast—and away," he said importantly.

Again Veronica blushed deeply, and again Mr. Pindar just glanced at her.

Blushes became Veronica, she looked unusually pretty and young in her embarrassment. Her lover evidently thought so, for at this point he rose, and with almost an impassioned air asked her to come out with him into the garden.

We will not describe this parting scene. Suffice it to say that Theodore's fervency on the occasion amply atoned for two or three afternoons of neglect, and he left Veronica with quite a warm glow in her heart. Love was sweet, she felt, even—even if the lover were not quite the ideal lover.

"The dear girl!" exclaimed Theodore dramatically as he walked down the drive. "I could hardly tear myself away from her, Pindar. You have no idea what a hold she has taken on my heart. I feel as if I could not live through two long months without seeing her."

"I thought you intended running down to see her at the end of a month," observed Mr. Pindar, drily.

"Oh yes, of course, I forgot—so I am," said Theodore, looking a little disconcerted. "I remember now, I did say so."

"I trust your memory will serve you better when the month is up," said the Rector sharply. Then as though sorry to have spoken sharply, he hooked his arm through the younger man's and tried to discuss pleasantly with him the details of the approaching wedding.

"Keep an eye on the sweet girl, and let me know at once if she has even a finger-ache," were Theodore's last words to his friend as the train bore him away.

A month passed. Theodore wrote every day with unfailing regularity to his *fiancée*, and sent besides frequent letters to Mr. Pindar. Judging by his letters, preparations were being made on a large scale for the bride. A billiard-room was being built on to the Manor, with a smoking-room opening out of it, all to please the bride. The stables, also, were being enlarged, and two valuable hunters had been bought and were now waiting, like the bride, to be installed. Veronica did not hunt, but Theodore, having made no inquiries on the point, could not be expected to know this, so his kindness remained the same. Naturally, these extensive alterations required constant supervision, so at the end of a month he found it impossible to get away, and had to forego the promised visit to his *fiancée*. This, so he said to Veronica, gave him great grief; but, as he said to Mr. Pindar, there was so much to think of, and so much to do, he had no time for idle repining. His evenings, though, would have been very dull—this also was to Mr. Pindar—had it not been for the society of some old friends who had lately returned to the neighbourhood; Captain and Mrs. Blake, and their only child, a daughter named Celia. For two years they had been travelling for Celia's benefit, and the two years had improved Celia wonderfully. She had been charming as a school-girl, she was now lovely, quite the belle of the neighbourhood. The Blakes' little place adjoined his property. Most kind people. He could turn in there every evening if he chose, always certain of his welcome. Celia was as musical as she was lovely, quite an acquisition, would be a delightful companion for Veronica, though, of course, years younger. Had he mentioned that the intended billiard-room was to be changed into a music-room? Celia had suggested it, she was so fond of music, and he thought it a capital suggestion.

On the receipt of a letter from Theodore, the Rector usually walked up to the Grove and gave the Hookers the benefit of the news it contained, but on this occasion he departed from his usual custom and did not walk up to the Grove; neither, when he next met the family, did he mention Celia.

The alterations seemed to make slow progress, in spite of Theodore's constant supervision of labour. The wedding had to be postponed: impossible to bring the bride to a scene of such great disorder. It was now fixed for the second week in October, six weeks later than the date originally fixed. Towards the end of September Theodore in a letter to Mr. Pindar hinted at the possible necessity for a

further adjournment, but received a sharp letter from the Rector in reply.

"It does not look well when a man hangs back," the latter wrote, "and your *fiancée's* position is beginning to be a little trying. Her family were not pleased at the last postponement, and any further delay might expose her to humiliating remarks. I think, judging from a remark Daisy let fall, that they have *all* felt you might have spared a few days to Veronica, her distance from you not being great, and your time being quite your own. I am certain Veronica has felt it; she has been looking both pale and depressed. I should be sorry to think a friend of mine was behaving badly."

By return of post came Theodore's reply. It had a startling effect on the Rector. He set his teeth as he read, and his eyes glittered with a light before which Theodore, had he been present, would have paled and trembled. Thus ran the letter.

"DEAR PINDAR,—I am in a terrible mess. For mercy's sake lend me a helping hand. I cannot marry Veronica. I have no fault to find with her, but, I may as well confess the truth, I love Celia. I never meant to tell Celia, but she has found it out and has confessed she is not indifferent to me. Of course she knows nothing of this previous engagement, and I am anxious neither she nor her parents should ever know. Veronica is the difficulty. How will she take it? Will she create a scandal? Dear old friend, for the sake of old times, go up and try to arrange the matter quietly. Tell her I honour and respect her deeply, and all that sort of thing, but that my heart, in spite of all my efforts, has gone out to another. Gild the pill as much as you like, tell her I am prepared to make any money sacrifice, if that would compromise the matter."

The Rector read no further. With a fierce gesture he dashed the letter to the ground, and crushed it beneath his heel.

"The cur! The mean contemptible hound!" he exclaimed, pacing up and down his study floor like an angry lion. "No fault to find with her! with her! that angel! How dare he? Actually engaging himself to Celia, whilst Veronica, sweetest of women, waits for him, and prepares for her wedding-day. How dare he offer her his dirty money? And Celia is not to know! The dastard! Celia and her parents shall hear the whole story from me to-morrow. But Veronica! Oh heavens! how tell that long-tried, sensitive creature so vile an insult has been offered her! Why does he add to his selfish cruelty by deputing *me* to be his emissary?"

The Rector sat down on a chair against the wall, looking pale and unnerved, and began to speak to himself in short sentences, as a man in a dream.

"He asks me to go up and stab—the woman I love. The woman I love. How will she take it? How am I to soften the insult? What can I say—what say—to the woman I love? Tell her I rejoice in her escape?—the woman I love?"

Suddenly the Rector's strong hands began to tremble, and quite vacantly he gazed across the room at the wall facing him, of which he saw nothing.

"She is free!" he said, as if the thought had just occurred to him. "She is free—the woman I love."

Then he fell on his knees, and for a moment there was a sound as of weeping in the room. Only for a moment. The strong man conquered his weakness, and with characteristic promptitude prepared for action. First he dashed off a note to Theodore.

"I go," he said, "to expose you in your true colours to the Hooker family, and to congratulate Miss Hooker on her escape from so pitiful, so contemptible a creature as you. At the same time do not imagine this matter will be suffered to drop without my taking some speedy action in the matter, or that you will escape the obloquy you deserve. I need scarcely add that you will never again be suffered to dishonour my Rectory with your presence; but to-morrow I visit your neighbourhood, and unless you wish to ensure a horse-whipping, I should advise you to try change to a foreign climate for a season, and to keep out of my way."

The note finished, he took up his hat and prepared to leave for the Grove. As he crossed the hall he caught sight of the reflection of his agitated face in the mirror; he stopped and tried to compose himself.

"I wonder if this coat is good enough to go up in," he murmured, and then gave a strange little laugh, remembering Theodore had used almost the same words a few months ago when he started for the Grove——*and came back engaged to Veronica.* Dismissing the coat question quickly, as though ashamed so trivial a matter should occupy his mind at such a time, he stepped quickly out and strode across the garden. But all the way to the Grove six words haunted and agitated him. "And came back engaged to Veronica." He tried to escape from their haunting persistence, and to frame in his mind the words he should speak when he came face to face with Veronica, and had to break the news to her; but none that were suitable occurred to him. Never before had the self-reliant Rector felt so discomposed, so uncertain how to deal with a situation.

When he neared the Grove, he saw Daisy leaning carelessly against one of the pillars of the entrance gate, almost as if she were waiting for him to appear. As he came up she gave a glance at his agitated face, then said quickly:

"Who do you want to see?"

"Your sister—Veronica."

"Don't go to the house—she is in there," pointing to a little wood to the left. Oh, Mr. Pindar! I am so sorry for her."

"What? Does she know? Has the villain written to her?"

"Yes, and mentioned having also written to you. I felt you would come at once to help Veronica. That is why I am waiting to tell you where to find her."

"Daisy! What shall I say to her?"

Daisy looked embarrassed. "You must speak for yourself," she said, after a slight pause.

"Do they know—the others—up at the house?"

"Not yet. Telling them will be to her the bitterest part of it all. Mr. Pindar, is there—is there no one who loves her well enough to take her away from the Grove, where she is so unhappy?"

For a moment—a moment full of meaning and emotion—the girl's blue eyes met the man's dark brown ones; then with a blush Daisy fled, and without a word the Rector turned and plunged into the wood. He had not to go far. Veronica was seated on a tree stump a little way back from the narrow path which led through the wood. She rose when she saw the Rector coming, and tried to greet him naturally, but in her pale sensitive face he read, as clearly as if she had expressed it, all she was feeling and suffering. The mortification, the wounded pride, the desperate struggle to keep up a brave appearance, and save what she could of her insulted woman's dignity.

"Thank you so much for coming," she said, her eyes downcast, her mouth quivering. "He said he had asked you to come to explain, to exonerate, but I wish for no explanations, don't trouble to exonerate him——"

"Exonerate him!" exclaimed the Rector, sudden anger almost choking him for a moment. "The coward! Exonerate him!"

"Let it pass. The loss of him is nothing. He was unworthy. I felt it; in my heart I felt it all along. But—Mr. Pindar, if you will tell mother, if you will only tell mother. Spare me that. You don't know how trying it has been at home. And now, oh, now, my life will be very bitter!"

"It shall not be bitter," burst forth the Rector passionately. "Give it to me, give it to me, Veronica. Give it to me, who love you, who have loved you for years beyond everything in the world. Give me your life, Veronica. Let me take you away from this home in which you have been so unhappy, to one in which you will be adored. Come and fill my empty heart, come and brighten my loveless home—Veronica! Dearest, sweetest, loveliest, oh come away with me—with me, who love you."

No words can describe the tumult of feeling which surged up in Veronica's heart as she listened to these impassioned words. Amazement, sudden deep conviction of the new lover's absolute truth and sincerity, a quick answering of love to love, intense relief and joy, succeeded each other with lightning rapidity. In two moments, as though by the stroke of an enchanter's wand, the world changed for Veronica. Here was the dream-lover of her womanhood, come at last, flesh and blood, standing close to her, absolutely satisfying, true, oh, who could doubt it, true to the core. No more bitterness, no more lovelessness, no more aching of heart. The dull cloud which year by year had been pressing lower and lower upon her had rolled

away, and the brightness of heaven seemed suddenly to stream in upon her. Her new-found, unexpected happiness did for her what insult and misery had failed to do—it broke her down. She covered her face with her delicate hands, and burst into sobbing as abandoned and uncontrollable as that of a child.

Very tenderly, almost as if she had been a child, the Rector tried to soothe her. He took her into his arms, and pressed the fair head down upon his broad breast, and let her sob there, until the over-charged heart found relief, and some measure of calmness was restored.

And all the time he spoke to her words which were as balm to the long-tried, sensitive soul.

"And now, dearest, it is your turn to speak," he said at last. "Can I, dare I hope that you will love me?"

"I think," answered Veronica in a low voice, "I think I must have loved you unknowingly all the time. I seemed to recognise you when you said you loved me; to recognise you as the one I had been longing for, as the one man in the world who could make me absolutely happy."

"Then you will be my wife, my own dearly-loved wife? You will let me take you away from the Grove—soon—soon?"

"If—if you wish it," said Veronica, again trying to hide her flushed face with her hands.

"If!" cried the Rector, gently pulling her hands away, and stooping his face over hers

There was much virtue in that "If."

EVENING.

CHILD, let me hasten on my way!
It grows already cold and late;
The closing of a weary day:
I see, beyond, the golden gate.
Why sing to me? so wondrously,
So strangely sounds your noontide song!
What was the word? Love?—Love! Ah me!
I had forgotten it so long.

And yet—and yet—in days long past,
I think the word once sounded sweet!
But blinding mists are gathering fast—
I go where rest the weary feet.
The darkening path leads surely on,
Though slower still the footsteps fall:
The sun is set—the stars are gone—
O child! the distant voices call.

C. E. MEETKERKE.

LETTERS FROM SOUTH AFRICA.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Through Holland," "In the Lotus Land," etc., etc.

Durban. *May*, 1893.

CARE AMICE,—My last letter left us sitting upon the pier at East London, in the midst of desolation, watching the storm; the wild waves that ran mountains high and sent up their spray to the skies, and the terrific winds that seemed to blow from all points of the compass at once. Seldom had we seen so grand a sight; nowhere in England; there are few spots in our little island where the ocean comes in with the strength and sweep it possesses here.

Dark and lowering clouds rolled on in heavy masses when they were not coming down in a deluge; the wind rushed past us in fearful blasts, sometimes with the roar of a cannon, as though it would shake the very foundations of the earth. Cold and cruel looked the water. Our Land of Goshen, the *Dunottar Castle*, rode at ease, unconcerned, unsympathetic. Here we spent hour after hour, unable to tear ourselves away from all this magnificence; taking refuge in some shelter when the sky opened its floodgates. On the pier were great cranes, like small towers, but unfortunately the great ships could not come up to them. Behind was the high signal box which did duty as the harbour-master's office; beyond, the little colony of Old East London, lying on the slopes, its picturesque red roofs asking for blue sky and sunshine to come and harmonise with them, and make lovely.

The harbour-master thought he saw signs of a change for the better. We saw none, but were willing to trust to his greater experience. It was some consolation to know there was a chance of getting off next morning. If we could have taken up our abode in the signal box, or in one of those homely red-roofed houses, where peace and quiet seemed to reign, we should not have minded; but the miseries of the inn were not to be thought of without a shudder.

Yet we had to go back to it occasionally, for we could not always dine with Duke Humphrey. So every now and then we found ourselves in the midst of the uncivilised crowd. The weather affected neither their spirits, appetite, nor digestion. There must have been at least sixty people imprisoned by the gale, though fortunately not all for the *Dunottar*. We grew to know every house in the town by heart, and there was nothing to repay one in the knowledge. It seemed behind the age in all its institutions. A very poor Reading-room was attended by two or three consumptive-looking men, and a few young idlers who looked as if waiting for something

to turn up in their favour—and would have long to wait. The papers were old and few. There was no life or enterprise about the place, which we compared with the admirable room at Grahamstown. Underneath was a concert-room, and as there was some sort of operatic company in the town, practising was generally going on; we scanned the old papers to the undertones of a fiery duet between a high voiced prima donna and a raging bass, both vowing eternal revenge if each was not profoundly true to the other.

No doubt we saw everything about East London in its gloomiest colours. It could scarcely be otherwise, where we had no resting-place for the sole of our foot, and felt cast adrift. We had no introductions, never having anticipated that we should spend a single hour in the benighted place. Our lady-traveller we never met again, though every time we turned a corner we looked out for her flowing garments and fairy footstep. But she wisely remained indoors during the storm. She at any rate had a fair haven of refuge, and no doubt all this time pitied us profoundly. But pity brought no relief.

At night, acting upon the harbour-master's suggestion, we went down to the port once more; beloved quarters where for a time we forgot our troubles and were happy.

He was just leaving his house and going into the perched-up signal box of an office. The little home looked warm and comfortable, a picture of domestic bliss. Cheerful lights gleamed through the windows. Upon a blind we saw the reflection of a comely female figure, no doubt the happy presiding deity of his lares and penates: for with so sensible and good-tempered a husband, she must have felt herself in an earthly paradise.

"Ah, sirs!" he cried as soon as he caught sight of us; "so you have come down again to consult the Oracle."

The very sound of his voice was a tonic, and suggested hope.

"Will the Oracle deign to respond?" we asked.

"I think silence would be wiser," he laughed. "Or if we imitated some of our English statesmen and spoke words that suited either event, we might be looked upon as a greater prophet. It is a special gift to be able to say a great deal which may mean anything or nothing."

"In a word, the wisdom of the Oracle," we returned. "But at least you have a mighty subject in the storm. To us it seems worse than ever. Where are the signs of abatement you spoke of?"

Even at the moment, a furious blast rushed past us, so that we all held on to the staircase rails. On the shore the sea was thundering and roaring; we heard the dashing and breaking of the waves, though it was too dark to see them; the outlines of the pier with its great cranes could just be traced; the lights of the *Dunottar* loomed out like earth stars, gigantic and mysterious. Above, the skies were dark and portentous; not the faintest vestige of heaven's stars to bid us take heart of grace.

"I confess that the signs I thought I saw at midday have not borne much fruit," said the harbour-master. "I had hoped for better things before now, and they have delayed. But delays are not denials," he added, consciously or unconsciously echoing a truth in theology. "Between now and to-morrow morning much may happen. I still think you may get off. In spite of all this tearing and booming the strength of the storm is spent; it will abate if a fresh one does not spring up."

"Your experience ought to guide you, for you must have wonderful seas and gales here," said H. "Many people would almost envy your berth."

"Ay, sir! If any one knows the truth of that wonderful Psalm I think I do. Many a vessel have I seen in peril, and some I have seen go down. I hardly think any one would envy me *that* experience. There, if you like, you have a drama that sets you dreaming at night, until you start up fancying you hear the cry of men in despair, before the cruel sea swallows them up and they are seen no more. I have watched bodies cast on the beach the day after a wreck when all signs of storm and tempest have passed away, and sunshine and blue sky smile down upon a sea without a ripple, and the upturned face of the dead looks as calm and placid as it did thirty years before in its mother's arms. But in spite of all its cruelty and danger, and all its unearthly force, there is no sight to equal that of a great storm. Those fearful tornados on land that we read of, devastating whole districts in America, have only the element of destruction in them. They have none of that mighty grandeur which takes your breath and holds you spellbound, and makes you wonder if the earth will stand such repeated shocks."

Again as he spoke, a terrible blast rushed past; the sea not far off seemed to be running mountains high; we could almost feel the spray on our faces; the land appeared to tremble. As he spoke we almost fancied we saw vessels in distress out on the broad waters; heard cries for help from the drowning. It was all imagination, of course; nothing could be seen in that Egyptian darkness, and nothing could be heard above the mighty voice of the tempest. Wave after wave broke with its thunder, and blast after blast flew by on mighty wings that never grew tired and were never folded.

We were standing at the top of the long flight of steps leading to the office. One almost wondered the whole thing was not swept away, but though only of wood it was solidly built; the wind rushed through piles and pillars. Here and there in the little houses of Old East London a light glimmered from a window; it was a consolation to know there were no fishing boats without, no anxieties within: such anxious faces for instance as we have seen on the wild coast of Brittany, where in storms that sweep the coast of Penmarch and Audierne and Douarnenez, the lives of men too often go down: storms as wild, as fierce, as destructive, as this we were gazing on

ST. JOHN'S RIVER.

to-night, but without its extreme and appalling grandeur and magnificence: waves not mountains high and blasts less frantic. Yet the element off that coast of Finistère is more dramatic and tragic; the danger greater, men risk more for their livelihood. All is so picturesque and interesting, too; the simple Breton type both of men and women; costumes which give them so distinctive a character, so romantic an appearance; the annals of their daily lives, which repeat themselves from year to year and from generation to generation, with so little variation one might take it for granted that what is happening now in these primitive fishing villages of Brittany is the exact counterpart of what was going on a century ago. It will not be so much longer. Even there the change is coming; in the wildest parts of the Morbihan—sacred to Georges Sand—the whistle of the steam engine is heard, and all the charm of costume, all simplicity of life and directness of motive is fast disappearing.

But this you will say is neither here nor there, and we are wandering very far from East London and the South African Coast. What matter, if with the stroke of the pen we can return? Is not this greater magic than Indian jugglery, or hypnotism—or even the magic charm of our days in Cairo? Let us then again mount outside the harbour-master's office and survey the elements.

Whilst we have taken our flight into Finistère they have not abated. They are as wild and furious and shrieking as they have been since we first set foot in the hope-forsaken place. The harbour-master looks out into the great eternal blackness of space; seems to see things withholden from our eyes, hear sounds inaudible to our ears We feel as if he were a little uncanny.

"Are you a sorcerer?" we suggest. "Can you see into the darkness and the future? Have you powers denied to others of which we know nothing?"

"Yes," is the startling reply; "the powers of experience always bent in a certain direction; just as you have powers denied to me. There is nothing wonderful about it; no magic, no sorcery. I can hear voices in the wind, see signs and meanings in the clouds, and read their interpretation. To you they would be as unintelligible as the handwriting on the wall to Belshazzar; but for all that I am no Daniel; my gift is not superhuman; it is shared by the humblest fisherman or coastguardsman who has tried to keep his eyes and his intelligence open. To-night, for instance, you see no change in the weather; yet I do; as distinctly as if the voice of the storm spoke to me in my own language. And I will tell you this for your consolation: if they come to you to-morrow morning before the day has well-broken, and tell you that you are going off, you may rise and dress in confidence. It will be no false alarm, as it was this morning."

"That was a barbarous proceeding," we said, "and East London deserves to be struck off the rolls for its indifferent cruelty."

"There lies a matter on which I must express no opinion," laughed the harbour-master. "I should not like to think, sir, that the next time you passed East London in the *Dunottar* I had no chance of exchanging civilities with you. If we are benighted now, as you suggest, what should we be if we were struck off the visiting list?"

"I would confine it to vessels that can enter the harbour. There must be many of the Castle Line that can do this. Or else, let East London rouse itself, and build a good hotel, and give decent accommodation to weather-bound travellers. Never were lines cast in more unpleasant places. In the time to come we shall think of East London as possessing only one place and one person: this glorious sea and harbour, with all its wild solitude and desolation; and the amiable master who rules the destinies of the port, and in a measure redeems the inhospitable impressions of the town."

"Ah, sir, you are too good," returned the harbour-master. "Would I could have done anything to lessen your discomfort. Again my tongue is tied, yet I may say that East London might do worse than follow your counsel. But the whole of South Africa, you know wants improving in this direction."

"I sincerely hope East London is at the bottom of the list—for our own sakes," we laughed. "Surely there are no deeper depths of discomfort than this?"

There was no reply, but silence sometimes gives consent. Yet it might be that we were talking to deaf ears. In his own snug little house, not many yards from us, the light shone cheerfully from the windows; the comely female figure could still be traced upon the blind, now apparently bending over some domestic needlework: marking socks with a beloved name it might be; or knitting a comforter for winter nights of storm and tempest, into every woollen stitch of which was inserted the golden thread of affection. In such a haven of refuge, what could he know of discomfort, loud neighbours, rough surroundings, noisy "bars," and dark and miserable bedrooms? What could he know of anything excepting peace and happiness and contentment, a quiet greeting twenty times a day, if twenty times a day he went to and fro? So it may be, I say, that we talked to deaf ears. We must suffer affliction before we can learn to pity the afflicted.

We left him to his work and his watching: to look out into the dark night with magic eyes that saw things invisible to us, and listen with magic ears to sounds we could not hear. Perhaps he knew something of the music of the spheres; one would suppose the voices of the elements closely allied to them.

We went on to the pier in the darkness, where the cranes loomed up like devouring monsters or levers to move the world; listened to the storm, and, dimly, saw the sea heaving and tossing in all its restlessness, the waves roll in and dash out their lives upon the shore. It was such a night as Norna of the Fitful Head would have gloried

in, selling her power to the men who came to her for a change of wind and weather.

We felt rather in jeopardy. The night was so dark that a false step might easily be taken, and once in that boiling surge there would be no turning back. So we gave it a long good-bye and returned ourselves to *terra firma* : turned as it proved for the last time.

It was a steep climb up to the town. The way was not macadamised, and the wind sent us very much where it would, but we arrived at last. The longest lane has a turning, as we said before. Here we were not anxious for the turning, which only meant misery and discomfort. As for East London, it looked very much like a bottle of champagne a week after it has been opened : very much down, and very flat and dead. The storm had left its traces. The roads had been washed away by the rains, and the very houses looked blown about ; a few lights gleamed just sufficiently to enliven the darkness. Every door seemed inhospitably barred, every window was closely shuttered. Those who had homes had settled themselves comfortably for the night, to listen with a certain amount of satisfaction to the beating of the storm without, which could not affect them within. The streets were deserted ; no living creature was anywhere visible ; we had it all to ourselves.

We walked up and down and to and fro until it was time to retire to our wretched rooms with some chance of sleep. From the hotel lights streamed out upon the pavement, voices came from within. People were beginning to grow tired and discontented, and quarrelsome with each other ; fractious, as only children of a larger growth. The very inn-keepers seemed to have had enough of it ; this unwonted crowd was not a usual experience, and the perpetual motion was wearisome : they had to run all ways at once and be in all places at the same time. In our rooms we found yet another misery ; after all there was a deeper depth. Our luggage had gone down in the morning with the cavalcade of animated waxwork curiosities. It was not brought back as soon as the cavalcade returned, as there was a chance of our getting off during the day ; but they undertook to see to it. This they did so well, that when we returned in the evening we found they had allowed the baggage to be locked up in the Custom House shed, the officials had gone off with the key, and we were reduced for the night to what we stood up in.

We said little. There are troubles which bring resignation with them, and this was a case in point. Mercifully, all the watching and waiting and wondering, the going to and fro all day long with no definite object in view, had proved sufficiently tiring, and before long, in spite of far-off sounds of quarrelling and conviviality—it might be either or both—we lost consciousness of outer things, and in the land of dreams happiness and a fairer world came back to us. It is not always May—but it is not always December.

The night passed, and the next morning before daylight had

come, we were aroused with the intelligence that we "were going off."

Pleasanter words we had seldom heard. Remembering the harbour-master's prophecy, we took it for granted that this was no false alarm. Presently, in the dull grey morning, cold and cheerless, everyone bound for the *Dunottar*—the whole waxwork cavalcade—had turned out. No decent breakfast had been prepared, but cups of rank coffee stood upon a table for those who could manage to take them; we could not. This time there were two "vanloads" of passengers for the vessel, and I wish I could have sketched them for your benefit: a more motley collection of antiquities and curi-

A Bit of Natal.

osities never was brought together: and in spite of surrounding discomfort, it was impossible not to be amused. But the horse in command of each van was wound up, the curiosities were set in motion, and in due time reached the harbour. There everyone's gaze was directed to one point; and lo, the cone was no more, and the danger signal had disappeared.

We wondered how far we had influenced the harbour-master; probably not a fraction. Yet the wind still blew great guns, and the sea still seemed to run mountains high. To us the state of things appeared little better than yesterday; but no doubt to magic eyes and ears there lay all the difference between danger and safety.

So we embarked on the small tender that had got up steam for

our benefit, and shook the dust of East London from our feet. Down the harbour, between the piers we steamed.

As we passed the little office perched high in the air, a window was opened, the harbour-master looked out, and catching sight of us in the bow of the tender, took off his hat and waved us a good-bye. We returned the salutation, and felt it was the only farewell on our part that had in it the smallest earnestness. The head was withdrawn, the window was closed; another moment and we saw the harbour-master descending the long flight of stairs towards his earthly paradise; where no doubt a table was spread with snow-white linen, and good things were prepared, and behind coffee cups sat a smiling, waiting, ministering spirit, guardian of his happiness.

We went on. Before us the sea looked formidable. It still broke upon the shore with a sound of thunder; still dashed over the pier in mighty showers of spray; the wind still blew "wintry blasts." The little tender rocked to and fro. At such moments nervousness is not one of our conditions, but we did feel a little anxious as to the result. Out there was that great black mass upon the waters, calm and serene as ever, faithful to her absentees; though had we still been weather-bound, I don't know how it would have ended. The alternative does not bear a thought. We must have done something in our desperation; taken bold refuge with the harbour-master and his Phyllis, or perseveringly knocked at every house in the suburb until we discovered our unknown lady-traveller. "There are evils that bring a pallor to every cheek and a tear to every eye:" and there are miseries that do even more than this.

The little tender began to rock to and fro and toss about like a cork upon the waves long before we had reached the mouth of the harbour. What would it be beyond?

"Gentlemen," said the steersman (no doubt the term included "ladies" also), "we shall have a bad time crossing the bar. Everyone who stays on deck will be drenched. Everyone who does not want to be drenched should go below."

Before the echo of his words had been carried away by the elements, there was a general stampede amongst the feminine passengers. Their beloved head-dresses and feathers—fearful and wonderful yet still beloved—were threatened. After such a calamity they might well cry the deluge.

Down they went in feverish haste, little screams penetrating upwards as a lurch landed one and another at the bottom more quickly than was agreeable. The men-kind followed more leisurely; and as everyone else went down, we went down too, upon the principle that one sheep follows another.

Then to our horror, the hatchway was closed and we were imprisoned in a living tomb. Had we known, not for five thousand drenchings would we have gone down. The feeling of being boxed up alive was unendurable. Come what might we were helpless.

But the thing was done, we could only stand amidst the little crowd and make no sign. The few minutes seemed hours of agony; and then we heard the hatchway opened, and the bar was passed. We were free once more. As it turned out, the good little tender had not shipped a drop of water, and no one need have gone below.

And now, tossing and tumbling, we were approaching the *Dunottar;* soon were under her very bulwarks. Never had she seemed so huge and monstrous; never had we felt such a glow of affection for her.

The manner of getting us on board was peculiar.

A huge basket, capable of holding two or three people was lowered from the *Dunottar* by means of chains, the donkey engine and a crane. Into this two of us were shut in by turns. Then we swung in the air like Mahomet's coffin, and felt very uncomfortable, very cribbed and confined. We were fastened up; could see nothing; and for all we knew might next moment be dropped into the restless riotous waves. It needed only a little failure of the basket-work, or a sudden mania on the part of the engineer, and there we should be. Where we were we could hardly tell. It has been said that the feeling of rising in the air is extremely delightful; shut up in a basket it is certainly very much the opposite. Away we went, to the sound of the clank-clank of the engine—just as one sees the huge railway boxes swinging between earth and heaven at Folkestone, then quietly dropped on to the deck of the Boulogne boat. In like manner we also soared. Then we felt ourselves swing round—a very *mal de mer* sensation—then suddenly were dropped on to something with a shake that rattled our very bones: the engineer had mistaken his distance, and was dreamily thinking of the hold, not the deck: so we reached the end of our journey far too abruptly, and had to be assisted out in a jelly-like condition. But we opened our eyes on the deck of the good ship, and a pleasanter sight never greeted unhappy travellers. The Land of Goshen at last, on which for two whole days we had fixed our hopes.

We could scarcely believe our good fortune. Nearly a week had elapsed since we stood under the shadow of those masts, and it seemed almost like a home-coming. But the delay had seriously interfered with our plans, and several things we had hoped to do and see before returning to Cape Town had now become impossible. However, much yet remained.

We had fondly hoped that the very moment the passengers were on board we should start for Durban. It is true we had not observed any getting up steam on the part of the *Dunottar*, but thought that perhaps during our absence she had invented a patent for consuming her own smoke. On getting on board, however, the outlines of East London were still to delight our eyes. The cargo for the port had not been landed and was to be landed now. So after all, we had not detained the good ship and she had not waited our pleasure.

"I don't know that you can quite say that," remarked Captain

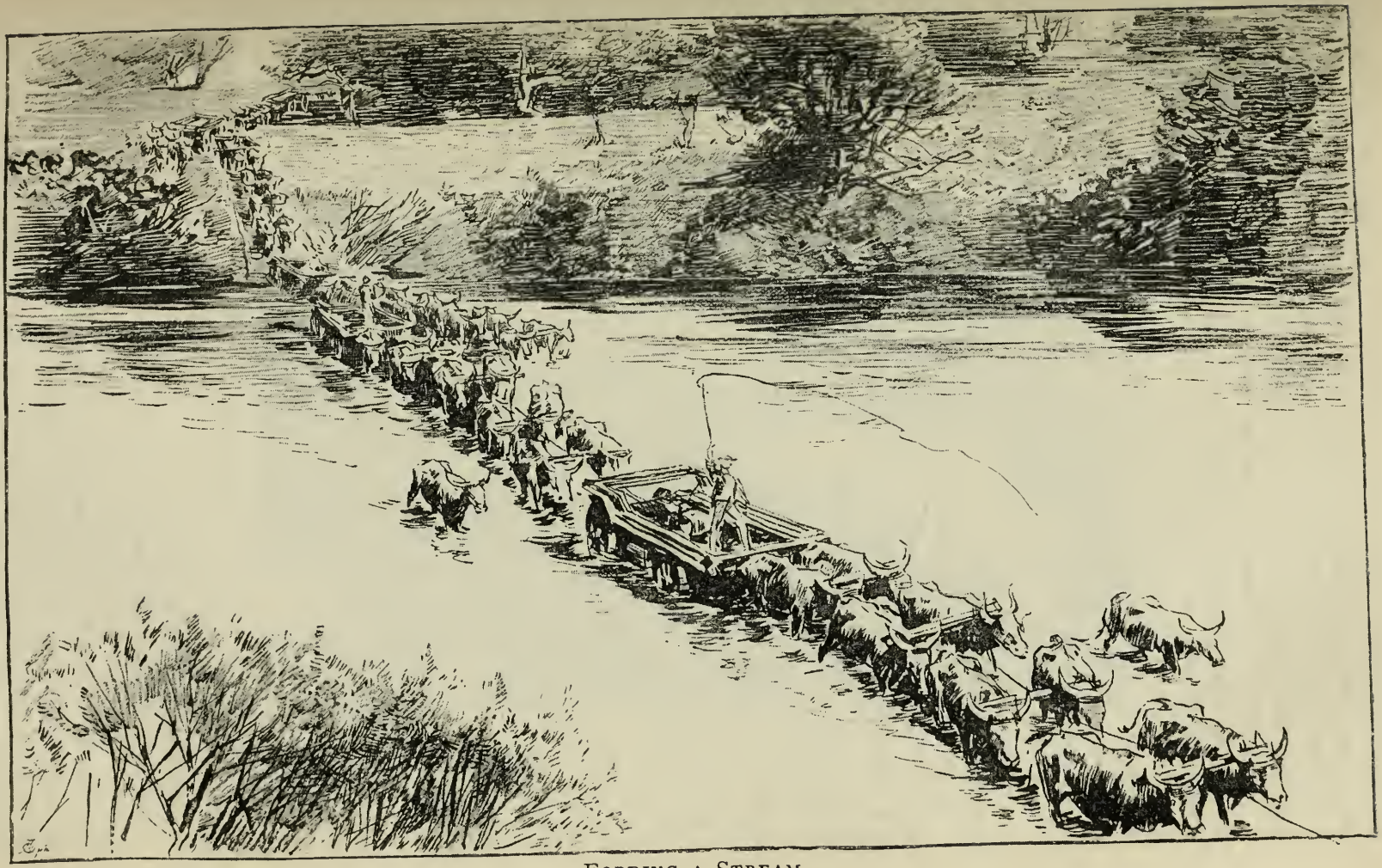
Robinson. "Had it been a case of cargo alone, I think I should have gone on to Durban, and landed it on the return journey. We really waited for you. But having waited so long, we must now land the cargo; especially as we can do so, and still leave Durban at our appointed time. The only difference is that the spare days we should have spent pleasantly in that lovely spot we have spent uncomfortably here. But I can quite imagine that compared with you we have been in paradise."

The lighters were alongside and unloading was vigorously going forward. All day long we rocked about in the sea in most unpleasant motion. Yet to us, never were rollings more acceptable, never quarters more appreciated, never outlines more charming than those of East London rising upon the hill. Most certainly it was a case in which "distance lent enchantment to the view," if ever there was one. Almost within hail was our beloved harbour, which had indeed proved to us a haven of refuge. Above the pier rose the signal box, and beyond, on the slopes, the red roofs of the picturesque old town. All day long the lightermen went to and fro, tossing about in the rough sea, indifferent to an occasional drenching. So it went on until five o'clock, when everything was ended and the last lighter struggled back to the harbour and smooth waters.

Then there was a grand signal and excitement. The syren lifted up her voice. It was an unearthly howl, but to us Albani's sweetest notes could not have been more full of melody. We could almost fancy there was another farewell wave from the harbour-master's box, and then found ourselves in motion. The rejoicing, as the outlines of East London gradually faded and disappeared, cannot be expressed in human language.

Night soon fell and the stars came out. We were running round the coast but could see very little of it. Here and there a solitary light gleamed; here and there a fire blazed; and that was all. The gale had calmed down, the sea had returned to her wonted placidity; it seemed as though her purpose had been to detain us for nearly three days in the miseries of East London—we who had so little time to spare—and her cruel purpose accomplished, she once more smiled serenely.

The next morning we had made good way, and by mid-day might hope to reach Durban. We were still running round the coast, and in the night had passed that portion of it which is nearest to Pondoland, where the wonderful "Gates of St. John" are, and where the river empties itself into the sea. The country here as we steamed along seemed very beautiful and fertile; creeks running up into the land; many a river flowing to the ocean between richly wooded valleys; an endless succession of forests; plains backed by hills and undulations where all the fruits of the earth might be cultivated. Hour after hour passed, and still the scene remained the same; rich, and charming, and full of possibilities. One longed to



FORDING A STREAM.

land and explore, and spend weeks or months in becoming acquainted with all this wild delight; but as that could not be, we made the most of our present experience. And then, about midday, the beauty culminated: we reached Durban.

Here, too, the *Dunottar* had to anchor outside. To us it was almost an advantage, for nothing could be lovelier than the scene. The sun shone, the sky was blue, and the sea was calm as a river. We had returned to summer, and intense heat. The land stretches round in great arms, leaving a wide passage admitting to a magnificent natural harbour. This might have been utilised; quays constructed for the largest vessel afloat; but it has never been done; the harbour lies further up, where there is less room, and where the *Dunottar* cannot enter. Some day, when South Africa has waxed great, a new harbour will be constructed.

Nothing, we say, could be fairer than the view. In front stretched wooded heights; great rocks rose out of the water round which the sea plashed in gentle white swirls. At the end of the point—Bluff Point—high up on the land, stood a white lighthouse, the rays of sun flashing upon its glass.

Of the town, nothing could be seen. It lies round the bend of the land, at the end of the harbour, a mile away from the landing quay. Thus we saw little beyond the natural beauty of the coast. Neither Cape Town—in spite of Table Mountain—nor Port Elizabeth, could compare with it. There was something that appealed and came home to you; a nestling, sylvan beauty; undulating wooded slopes, low-lying hills, and flat reaches that met the shore; all full of charm and all accessible. The arms of the land seemed to open, as though inviting one to enter, and bask in the haven of its calm waters. So still and serene was everything, it was impossible to believe that we had lately gone through one of the worst storms within the memory of man.

We dropped anchor in the beautiful bay—if bay it can be called. But we were not alone. Not far from us was the *Conway Castle* riding at anchor, and getting up steam; a vessel much smaller than the *Dunottar*, but in her way equally beautiful. She had been so waiting in patience ever since Wednesday morning, the time we had been due at Durban. For the *Conway* was bound for the Mauritius, for which port we had two or three passengers on board. She hailed our tardy arrival, therefore, with thanksgiving. Very lovely she looked outlined against the clear blue sky.

Scarcely had we dropped anchor before a tender was seen coming round the point and making slowly for us. This was not for the Durban, but for the Mauritius passengers, and to convey them to the *Conway*. Also to land Captain Robinson. We arranged to accompany him, thereby landing some two or three hours before the rest of the passengers. And thereby also, falling into misfortune: as you shall hear.

The little tender came alongside, and in half an hour's time the Mauritius luggage had been put on board, and our own also. For here we were to say good-bye to the *Dunottar*, not to rejoin her until we finally did so at Cape Town. It was quite a long farewell, and we should see much in the meantime.

We were soon steaming round to the *Conway*, and as we left the sides of the *Dunottar* she looked large enough to conquer the

NEAR DURBAN.

world. The water flashed all round us, sparkling in the sunshine. Brave and noble looked the *Conway;* calm and serene the skies; everything was full of promise.

We reached the *Conway;* the passengers were put on board; not *basketed*, as we had unceremoniously been at East London, but walking calmly up the gangway ladder. We were at one end of the tender, the luggage had all been placed at the other, on deck; our Durban luggage *in the hold*, as we had supposed.

There were various good-byes, good wishes, last words; the tender fell away and steamed for the harbour. As we reached the point, we said that the *Conway* had weighed anchor, and already started on her voyage; very soon the *Dunottar* would have the wide seas to herself.

We went to the other end of the tender. Here the Mauritius luggage had been; here it was no more. Something in the empty look of the deck, struck us as with a presentiment sure and certain. We turned to Captain Robinson. "Our luggage has been put on board the *Conway*, and is now calmly careering towards the Mauritius. What is to be done?"

"Oh," he laughed sarcastically; "we are not in the habit of playing such jokes—even if it were the first of April. Your luggage was of course put into the hold, and there we shall find it."

"There we shall never find it," we returned. "It has gone off to the Mauritius. I see it, as in a vision, lying on the deck." I really felt what I said, but Captain Robinson would not be convinced. To him I was merely suffering from a nervous delusion; the result of the tropics possibly, or an overdose of East London. It was useless to say any more; and indeed, right or wrong, what could be done?

We went round the point of the Bluff into the wide, land-locked harbour, a singularly peaceful and lovely spot. Above us, as we passed in, shone out the white lighthouse. All around were the low-lying hills and cliffs, here barren, there green and wooded; and in the calm water they found their reflections. These heights and cliffs are a favourite spot with the people of Durban, and often echo the sounds of fun and laughter and social gatherings, in which well-filled hampers and bumpers of sparkling wines play their part. This is the true climate for open-air enjoyment. Even to-day, in brown autumn, the sun, as we steamed up into the narrower channel, was hotter than our midsummer weather. Everything was dazzlingly bright. Their own midsummer must be too hot for exertion.

We steamed up to the landing-stage and the Custom House, a long low building, beyond which a crowd of Durban carriages were waiting for hire.

It was a very lively scene. Many people were on the quay, many vessels adorned the harbour; one of them a Castle packet steamer not too large to enter. Flags were flying in all directions, mingling their bright colours with the blue sky and the sunshine. Zulu workmen were running to and fro; tall, strong men, looking as lively and good-tempered as if they had not a care in the world, which is probably their true condition. Give them plenty of work, use them well, do not educate them, and they are happy and contented. But teach them to read, give them the opportunity of taking in a daily paper, and they grow discontented and seditious.

In the midst of this busy scene at Durban we came to a standstill. Now to prove the truth of the vision. The hatchway was withdrawn,

the hold was searched—and our baggage was not there. Everything that we had brought away from England had gone off in the *Conway*. We had watched the inimitable Parry, our steward, pack every separate object with quite affectionate care, making his own private remarks as he did so. From the first he had taken us under his ample wing, and never was "gentleman's gentleman" truer to his duties. And now all his care and attention had gone steaming off to the Mauritius.

Has not Byron a line which runs somewhat—"That was a trying moment—when all his household gods lay scattered round him?" How much more trying when they had all gone off to the Mauritius. What a theme for Byron's genius. We literally had nothing left but what we stood up in. A trying moment indeed.

It was difficult to see what could possibly be done. Everything had gone; all our dearest objects; our small but choice library of beloved books; treasures which had been our constant companions from the days of our youth, worth their weight not in gold but in rubies; the whole of our wardrobe also, including dressing-cases, macintoshes, and all our photographic gear.

We looked at Captain Robinson in silence. It was a moment too great for words—when all our household gods lay missing. We were now on the quay. He jumped back into the tender, leaving us standing the cynosure of neighbouring eyes. It is astonishing how soon a crowd finds out what is going on around it. "Quick as lightning," cried Captain Robinson to the engineer. "Steam out again after the *Conway*."

"Ay, ay, sir," was the reply, with a smile it was not in human nature to suppress, and which said as plainly as possible: "The turtle did win the race, but if we catch up the *Conway* that old proverb will have to retire for ever into the background."

Away she steamed. "Victory or death!" called out the captain, leaving us standing on the quay, feeling as if with his departure our last chance had fallen away.

We knew it was in truth a wild-goose chase, but that eternal hope, mercifully felt in all troubles and adversities, was still there. Yet it was not much more than a forlorn hope; if they caught up the *Conway* it would be a miracle. Desperation had given rise to the chase; in great emergencies we must do something, if it is only to tear our hair, or cry for the moon.

So we waited, slightly depressed in spite of all the flags and the sunshine and the blue sky. The tender had disappeared round the bend, and presently reappeared. It was neither victory nor death.

"The *Conway* was ever so far away on the horizon," said Captain Robinson with irritating cheerfulness. "I didn't think she'd have got so far. What I hoped was that she would see us following her, and stop to ask what was wrong. But it was too late. And now what is to be done?"

What indeed?

We could at considerable expense purchase a second outfit at the stores of Durban, in which we should look as well and feel as comfortable as square men in round holes : but all our personal treasures could never be replaced.

We were about to enter one of the stylish carriages in waiting, and commence a list of things to be replaced, when a clerk of the company came up.

"I think before taking any further steps in the matter, it would be well to wait a little," he said. "I have an idea that the missing luggage will be found. It has just been reported that after the *Conway* sailed, she stopped and signalled to the tender to go round to her—which was done. We can only suppose that the mistake was discovered in time, and that it will be all right."

I must explain that a second tender had almost immediately followed the first to the *Dunottar*, to spend two or three hours alongside whilst luggage and passengers were making ready to be landed. So once more hope sprang up. A hope partially fulfilled ; for when the tender in due time arrived, half our luggage arrived with it. A Mauritius passenger had seen it lying on the deck, as the *Conway* steamed off, had noticed the name in looking up his own luggage, recognised the mistake and reported it. The vessel was at once stopped and the tender was signalled. Unfortunately only half the mistake had been discovered ; the other half had in truth gone off to the Mauritius.

But there is a silver lining to every cloud.

"I think, sir," Parry had said in packing, "that I shall put all your own and Mr. H.'s most necessary things into one portmanteau ; and what I call your luxuries or less necessary articles into the other. It will be more convenient ; and also if one portmanteau should happen to go astray, you will have the consolation of knowing that you can just manage without it."

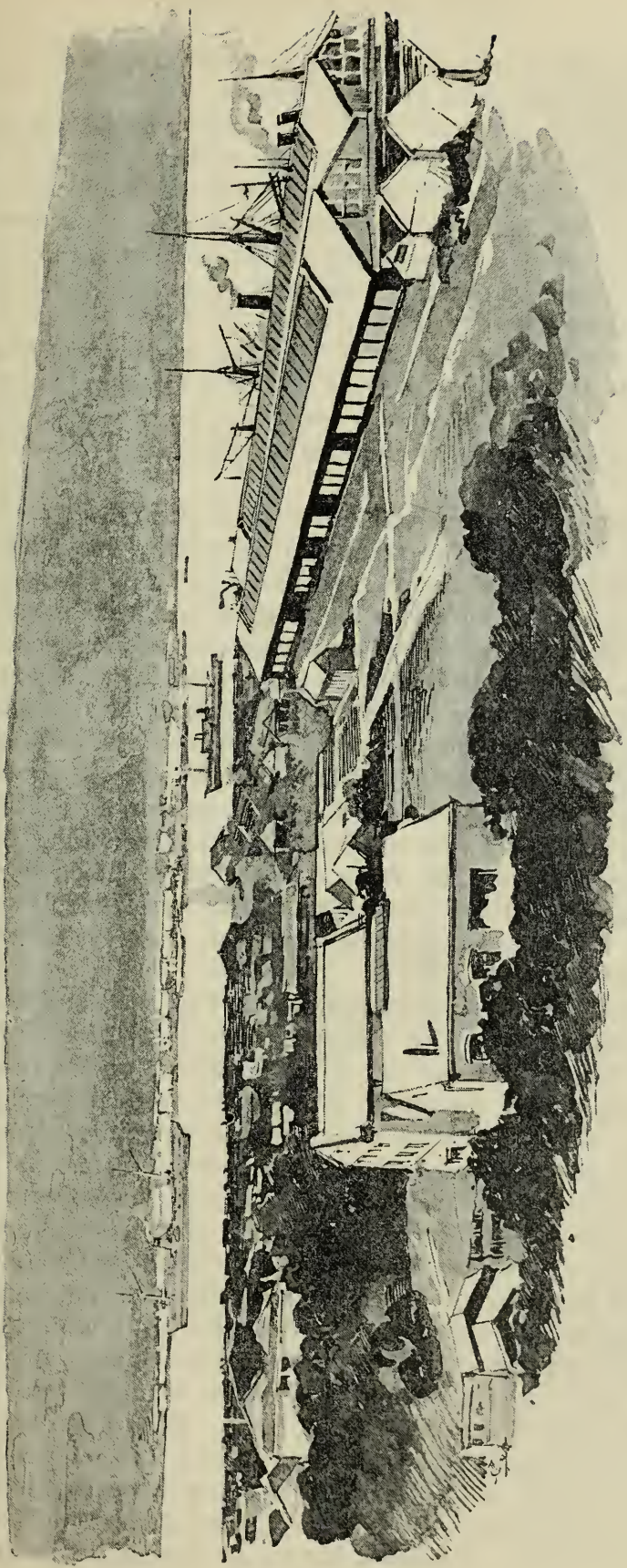
"But supposing the necessities go astray and the other remains ?" we objected.

Parry paused a moment, as if this was a new view of the matter.

"I think, sir," at length replied this delightful optimist, "that will not happen. I always myself find that no trouble is quite overwhelming. We can nearly always say : It might have been worse. Therefore if one of your portmanteaux should tumble out of a bullock waggon, or get shunted off to Kimberley instead of Johannisberg, or anything of that sort, depend upon it it will be the one you could best spare."

Parry little thought how soon his words were to come true. Was he a ministering spirit, or, in the sense that to foretell is to make happen, a malignant influence ?

(And here let me interrupt my letter to introduce for the reader's benefit what I could not at that time record, for it had not happened.



DURBAN HARBOUR.

A long article might be written upon the "Adventures of a Portmanteau," but it must be given in few words.

The missing bag had gone off in the *Conway Castle*, on its travels to the Mauritius. It was unlocked, had neither name nor address, nor any distinguishing mark upon it, to prove that it belonged to A. B. or C. We felt that there was very little chance of our ever seeing it again. The good ship made way; the weather was calm and fair; everything seemed prospering; the few passengers must have felt they were having a very good time of it.

But one night off the coast of Madagascar, in a fog, she struck upon a rock, and became a wreck. There, for some days, she remained; therefore no lives were lost. Everyone was rescued; but the good ship had to be abandoned, and presently she went to the bottom.

Weeks afterwards, we received the news with great sorrow; almost felt as if we had lost a friend, so noble had the *Conway* looked as she had steamed away from Durban waters that long past day. It made the loss of our luggage trivial and poor and insignificant, though we now felt that never again should we set eyes upon our missing treasures. If they had not gone to the bottom of the sea, at least they must now be scattered amongst the natives of Madagascar, who probably were fastening their blankets (if they wore them) with our boot-hooks, and decorating their ears and noses with our studs, and sitting in solemn assembly upon the why and the wherefore of our little library. Of the two alternatives we were more likely to get everything back from the bottom of the sea than from the fair natives; but we were not likely to receive anything from either. The "melancholy sea" as a rule keeps its treasures, whether they are the love of woman or bright gems which gleam.

Once more it is the unexpected which happens; and once more truth is stranger than fiction. We see it every day of our lives.

"Long long afterwards," not in an oak, but on the strong back of a railway porter, we again saw our beloved possession. We were in an old, picturesque house in the very fairest part of the Principality, seated at our desk near a window. Before us stretched long acres of rich and lovely undulating land adorned with magnificent trees. In the far distance, beyond all, shimmered the wonderful waters of the restless sea, blue and beautiful as the Mediterranean. An exquisite spot into which the vulgar world might not intrude.

As yet the moving object was not to be distinguished. At first we thought it looked like a stray cow from one of the meadows, that had developed a fancy for roving. Then it changed into Sindbad with the old man of the sea on his back. Finally we saw it was a railway porter carrying a portmanteau. Again a vision passed before us: long before we could identify it, we knew it was that missing bag we had last seen in Parry's hands in Durban waters, and which had gone off to the Mauritius. It seemed incredible, impossible, but was true.

Unlocked, only slightly strapped, it had travelled thousands of miles back to England. And when we opened it, not the smallest thing was missing. A few of the articles were really of value: studs for which we had a particular affection and similar objects: everything was there. After this we would never despair of anything. But Fortune has been kindly disposed towards us in such matters. A favourite pair of field glasses have been hopelessly lost thrice over. The last time they went round the world, and were travelling about for three years, unappropriated; we thought of them as buried treasures; yet they returned in the end, and we now look upon them with veneration.

And now to return to Durban and our interrupted letter.)

We had quite two hours to spare before the second tender arrived with the luggage and passengers, and deferring our shopping we took the carriage and went up to the Royal to secure rooms. Compared with what we had found at East London, we not only felt in Elysium but really are so. I must, however, enlarge upon this theme in my next letter, for I cannot do so in this.

When all was settled we went back to the harbour. The heat was intense, skies and sunshine were dazzling. We were just in time to see the tender turn the corner and steam alongside. What news, we wondered.

"Only *one* portmanteau," cried Captain Robinson, when it was declared; "then depend upon it the other is still on board the *Dunottar*. The *Conway* would never find out only half a mistake. But which half has come?"

"The half we could *not* do without. With a few extra things we shall now manage very well."

"And those extras must wait until to-morrow morning, by which time we shall know the best and the worst. I am glad to leave you in comfortable quarters. You will now look back upon East London as a dream of the past."

But these terrible realities do not vanish so quickly, excepting with such pachidermatous nervous systems as our gallant captain possesses. And, as the charms of Durban cannot be introduced at the end of a letter, you must in patience wait the course of time and the development of events, remembering the old French proverb: "Tout vient à qui sait attendre:" Even that day, let us hope, when we shall meet again across the waters of the Golden Horn, and clasp hands close and fast."

THE LADY JOAN'S SUITORS:

A MIDSUMMER-EVE'S MEDLEY.

By Mary Grace Wightwick.

IT was Midsummer-eve. I had been in to see my friend Harding's studio, full of all sorts of delicious bits: scraps in the present, promises for the future.

But even the studio was nothing to his den, a chaos of odds and ends dealing chiefly with the past; an old curiosity-shop, but picturesque and artistic in its arrangement. The room itself was large, and a fit setting for its contents. Square, wide-mouthed fire-place with antique andirons and old oak settle close by; deep recesses for the dark oak buffet and cabinets, oriel window, the upper lights of stained glass which threw rich-coloured rays of tempered light upon the *bizarre* collection within. The effigy of a knight in armour filled one corner of the room; the gleam of steel shone on the walls from every kind of warlike panoply: corselets, gauntlets *uisses*, shields, and weapons of every description. And the panels between were filled with antique portraits of those who, mayhap, had been the wearers thereof.

There was the gallant Cavalier with streaming love-locks,—a soldier of the Civil Wars—known familiarly to my friend's children as "Sir Guy." Tradition told of him that his mailed hand had been found on the battle-field after one of the First Charles's luckless fights, still grasping the Royal Standard, though his body itself had never been recovered. There was the Lady Eveline of the same period with the Vandyke hands and priceless lace. There were pages—no longer in waiting—hanging in oil and water-colours still in mute attendance as it seemed on the beauties of bygone Courts. Sweet women's faces looking out from sober coifs; Elizabethan gallants in ruff and doublet; and, gem of the whole gallery, Harding's pet picture of the Lady Joan Digby with her sad pathetic eyes; she who had been sometime maid of honour to the White Rose of York. I often thought she must have had a sorrowful history.

I had always had a special fancy for the antique, and my artist friend's collection had a strange charm for me. Oliver Harding was a *connoisseur* in such things, and plumed himself upon his treasures. For a moment I was mean enough to envy him as I went back that Midsummer-eve to my commonplace snuggery at home and lit my accustomed pipe.

While I mused dreamily as usual, and the smoke-rings curled upwards between me and my bare and dingy walls, a familiar friend looked in who was wont to keep me company at such times, and we

began discussing Harding's treasures. I don't exactly remember—perhaps the smoke stupefied me a little—but no doubt I must have offered to show him Harding's collection, for a few minutes later we both found ourselves standing upon the threshold of the artist's coveted den which I had so lately left. A great change had taken place in it since then.

I could not see anything of the master of the house, but apparently some sort of entertainment was on, for the whole room was full of light and moving figures. It could not be a dance, for the floor was strewn with rushes as was wont to be the custom in olden times. Yet apparently the guests were wearing fancy dress, for our nineteenth-century evening suit was conspicuous by its absence. The light came from torches stuck in the wall, which perhaps Harding thought more in keeping with the surroundings than gas-burners. (I hoped he was insured!) No one came to welcome us, and we felt rather out of it as we stood in the doorway looking on with rather bewildered eyes.

Presently however a Cavalier wearing a crimson sash across his shining corselet, and with bright curls falling over his shoulders, came up and accosted me.

"Noble sir! I have had a serious loss and am greatly inconvenienced," he began gravely. "It may be you can help me. Have you perchance found a hand anywhere?" He pointed to his right arm which was supported by a silken scarf, and I was horrified to perceive that the hand was missing. Surely this could be none other than Sir Guy himself!

"You will understand my dilemma, noble sir," he went on, "when I tell you that I have offered my hand and heart to the Lady Joan yonder." And he waved towards Harding's favourite possession, the portrait of a lovely girl in the quaint, straight-cut garments of the 15th century. "My heart, I need scarcely tell you, is in the right place; but alas! my *hand* is missing. How can I perform my promise?"

"My good sir," I began fussily (for I was nothing if not accurate), "the loss is vexatious of course, but the alliance you propose is, anyway, quite impossible!"

"On what grounds, sirrah!" he thundered fiercely. "Do you dare to question my choice?"

"Certainly not," I answered deprecatingly; "I also am one of the Lady Joan's humble admirers. But allow me to remind you that she was a maid of honour to the White Rose of York quite a hundred and fifty years before your time. The girl herself is all that is charming, but she is a girl of another period! You cannot join hands across the centuries!"

This unlucky remark seemed to infuriate him still further.

"Sir! you insult me!" he stammered; "I bid you defiance! My gauntlet lies upon the settle yonder; it belongs to my left hand; in fact, the only hand I have left. Master Oliver Harding picked it up

cheap at a curiosity-shop in St. Paul's; but by St. George, when any other man picks it up I will fight him to the death."

I hastened to beg pardon for my unintentional offence, and Sir Guy calmed down again.

"My loss makes me irritable," he said sighing. "Under the circumstances it is so particularly awkward. But *Nil desperandum* is the motto of our house. I must continue my search." And he went his way gravely, eyes upon the rush-strewn floor.

I turned towards the lady of his admiration, who was bowing and smiling from her frame with eloquent eyes. A little group of men surrounded her, waiting for her notice; nevertheless, as I advanced, she descended to meet me, which I considered a great condescension, for she had been a rich heiress in her day, and in great favour with the Queen.

"You see how I am troubled," she said sighing; "so many suitors! So few eligible. Sir Guy, as you know, is at present out of the question. He could not offer me a left-handed marriage. Besides, the King, my guardian, makes a point of my marrying a man of my own times. Is it not a hard condition? Otherwise there is the brave baron yonder."

I looked, and upon one of the coloured lancet windows which I remembered noticing on either side of the fireplace saw a *glacier* knight, clad like one of Cœur de Lion's warriors, tendering his homage apparently to the lady by my side. The *glacier* element about him attached him so firmly to his post, that he had some difficulty in detaching himself to follow up his other attachment, and meantime the Lady Joan opened her heart to me.

"The baron is rich and brave," she explained; "an admirable match; but there are insuperable difficulties. He is Early English—our ages do not correspond. Indeed, there is no correspondence of any kind between us; more especially as the baron cannot write. It grieves me sorely. He is tall and well-favoured, as you see; methinks a suitor to win any girl's heart. I would fain that the baron were only up to date!"

She cast down her lovely eyes and sighed. I echoed the sigh, for I saw no way of helping her: a trifling disparity of two or three centuries is not to be got over in a moment.

"But there is always Lord Reginald," she added brightening up. "He of the white plume yonder who is trying on his ancestor's armour. He says he cannot woo me as he is or he would be an anachronism. Lord Reginald, you know, distinguished himself at the Battle of the Boyne. But now he is fitting on the harness of a namesake who fought at Bosworth Field, and if he can only get himself a little ante-dated——!"

She watched with clasped hands and bated breath, and my eyes followed her towards a recess where a stalwart six-foot warrior was trying to squeeze himself into the equipment of an ancestor of five

foot three. He managed the arm-pieces fairly well, and the helmet was not much of a misfit. But the corselet was quite impossible, gasp and struggle as he would.

While his lady-love looked on at his ineffectual attempts with actual tears standing in her lovely eyes, a sudden *fanfare* of trumpets startled us, and there entered a procession preceded by my friend Harding, who had turned up at last in the gorgeous costume of Richmond Herald!

Harding was followed by several officers of the Court and by some pages, *gules* and *argent*, walking backward two by two, who were strewing red and white roses before a royal personage whom my inner consciousness, and the slight knowledge of history remaining from my school days, at once told me must be Henry, the Seventh of that name. Two enormous roses, red and white, forming a gigantic buttonhole, were tucked into the front of his fur-trimmed robe, and the same Tudor emblem adorned his velvet cap. Then I remembered that the unnatural Rose Wars were ended at last, and that the rival badges, so near of kin, could blend together harmoniously once more.

I had never been so near majesty before, and was so overcome with shyness—for I didn't know Harding visited in such circles—that I almost lost consciousness.

When I recovered, his Tudor majesty seemed to be making some sort of proclamation in the measured tones of a dry and chippy voice. From the style I feel sure he had composed it himself.

"Whereas we have decreed it to be our royal pleasure that the Lady Joan Digby, maid of honour to our dear Consort, should wed a noble of her own century, and, since no acceptable suitor hath presented himself who can fulfil the conditions, we hereby ordain"—he continued in his dry royal way—"that she remain the property of our trusty and well-beloved subject Master Oliver Harding, whom we herewith appoint our Court-painter at his own expense. And as for the Lady Joan's wealth and worldly gear, now much diminished in these days of commercial failure and agricultural depression, we decree that it be lodged for safe keeping in our own royal coffers."

* * * * *

I turned to sympathise with the luckless maiden condemned for so slight a cause for ever "to braid St. Catherine's tresses," but lo! she had vanished from my side and retreated humbly to her panel, whence she smiled sadly out at me immovable as ever. The *glacier* baron was once more adhering firmly to his cosy window niche. Sir Guy had vanished to pursue his fruitless search elsewhere. As I looked, the lively scene and brilliant colouring about me faded like a dissolving view, and instead there met my sight only the bare walls and meagre furniture of my smoking den at home. I was alone. My pipe had gone out, and, worse—lay at my feet shattered into fragments, like—what had been only—a Midsummer-Eve's Dream!

A GENTLEMAN.

By Angus Grey.

'ONCE for all, there can be no order in this house till O'Loughlin is banished. Disreputable, idle old creature! I hear he was drunk again last Sunday, and he has been feeding ducks in the kitchen this morning. I have no patience with such an old reprobate!"

Sir Gerald listened with his usual placidity to the dictum of his young wife, my lady Norreys, whose wealth (derived from silver mines) she had dedicated to the repair of his house's fortunes.

"Well, O'Loughlin has lived here all his life," he said doubtfully. "He taught me to fish and to shear a sheep when I was a little chap. I don't think the place would look itself without him."

"I certainly don't want it to look itself if that condition implies its being in a constant state of dirt and disorder," returned my lady icily. "That man respects nothing. I find he has used the strings of the old guitar that hangs in the music-room to make snares for rabbits! I believe he would take the best gilt four-post bed for a chicken perch if he had not already accommodated them with the yellow chariot in the coach-house."

"Well, we must see about it when winter comes," said Sir Gerald, taking refuge as usual in a policy of delay. "But his daughter Katy is a good girl, and the old fellow kept things going somehow or other all the time I was away."

Lady Norreys sailed out of the room with a dissatisfied toss of the head. She had an orderly English mind, intensified perhaps, according to the doctrine of heredity, by the years spent by her late father in sorting his specimens of quartz from the silver mines. And she was in a hurry to get her raw Irish home arranged on the model of her late villa residence at Putney. But so far the indigenous domestics at Connoughmore had proved a barrier in her path of reform

She went out, making ready for battle, to the walled-in three-acred garden. Its beds were bright with carnations, and snapdragons, and valerien, its plots well stacked with vegetables and fruit trees, though groundsel flourished cheerfully everywhere.

At last, in the somewhat dilapidated range of vineries, she found the culprit O'Loughlin, whose nominal post was that of gardener, though during the past years of leanness he had become a pluralist in the matter of offices. He was at this moment occupied in thinning the grapes with considerable skill. A red handkerchief was picturesquely bound about his head, and he was lilting to himself the words of a popular song:—

"Now all good boys, of hunting
And shooting, boys, beware.
If ever you go poaching
Take your gun, your dog, your mare;
For hares on lofty mountains
You'll have at your command;
And you never 'll see that lonesome place
That's called Van Dieman's Land."

"I beg your honour's pardon. I didn't feel your ladyship coming," the old man exclaimed, clambering down from the inverted box which had served him as ladder. "I just thought I might as well be sorting the grapes, or they'll be no bigger than peas, and we'll be disgraced when the English quality do be coming to see your ladyship. Sure Connoughmore used to be considered the capital of the county; an' will be so again, the Lord be praised, where we have a new missis here now."

"I am told, O'Loughlin, that you were found drunk on the road-side last Sunday," said the determined little lady, unmoved by his blandishments. "That was a disgrace to the house, and I cannot allow such things to happen."

"Well, indeed, your ladyship, it won't happen again," said the culprit, looking pathetic. "No fear of such a thing happening again. It was on the head of my grief for my father's brother, an' the Lord be praised that's what can't be again, for he's the last o' the stock. And indeed, my lady, it's very little was drank at the funeral, considering how respectable a man he was. An' there was no music at all for the boys to dance to, only whistling, out of respect for old Mrs. Noon, an' she given over an' anointed in the next house but one. But as for drink! His honour, Sir Gerald, may analyse me any day, from this to the New Year, an' he won't find e'er a drop o' whisky inside me, only an odd glass of porter to give me courage for the work. Sure it's hard for an old man like me to reach to everything, an' it's more help in the garden I'll be wanting e'er I'll be able to sow the small seeds."

Just at this moment Sir Gerald came along the strawberry-edged walk looking rather perturbed. "I have been speaking to O'Loughlin about his disgraceful conduct on Sunday," said my lady when he was within hearing. "Just look at the bruise over his eye! He is not fit to be seen in a civilised garden."

"You had better not ask him the history of that black eye," said Sir Gerald with rather a bitter smile. "Do you know that that precious scamp of a nephew of mine was at the wake, leading the rebels, and got into a row with the police. He is to be had up before the Bench next Thursday, and the chief charge against him is that of having assaulted Myles O'Loughlin. You'll have to bear witness against him, Myles."

"That, your honour, is what I'll never do agin one of your honour's family," said Myles decisively.

"But you'll have to, my good man; you'll be on your oath and in danger of being committed for perjury," cried Sir Gerald irritably.

"I was thinking of that myself, your honour, an' I took the road to Cloon last night, there I'd ask the opinion of a friend o' mine that has a great knowledge of the law. An' I have my mind made up now to what's the best way to save Master Albert," returned Myles. "Sure it's not for the like of me to be giving evidence agin the like of him."

"But how can you help it? What do you intend to do?"

"It's my intention," said Myles mysteriously, looking round as if afraid the chaffinches in the gooseberry bushes would carry tales; "it's my intention, Sir Gerald, when I'm brought into the Court, that *I won't understand the nature of an oath.*"

A hearty peal of laughter from Sir Gerald at the unexpected solution rather discomposed my lady, who had been listening with a dissatisfied air of half comprehension.

Some days passed before she had another encounter with the old man. It was close on midnight and all in the house were supposed to be asleep. But my lady was wakeful, sat up writing a letter for early post next day, and then bethought her of an almost finished novel which she might as well return to Mudie's at the same time. She took a candle and went downstairs. After some trouble she found the volume in the gun-room where her careless husband had thrown it down. Her smooth brow contracted as she noted the disorder of the room, shooting-boots lying muddy as they had been thrown there, and the shutters unclosed. "Such an invitation to burglars," she muttered, beginning to shut and bar them in proper English fashion.

But a gleam of light in the yard caught her eye. It proceeded from O'Loughlin's window, and she could see figures moving within.

Fear was unknown to Lady Norreys, and a hesitation to attack never crossed her mind. She went directly to the back door, unbolted it and walked across the yard to the lighted room. The window was uncurtained, and she had no difficulty in distinguishing the forms of James Moylan the under-keeper, one or two of the stablemen, and her own specially imported English footman. They were sitting round a table on which was displayed a bottle, some glasses, and a pack of cards. Near the hearth old O'Loughlin was kneeling at a chair. His back was turned to the company, but just at the moment when his intrepid little mistress had raised her hand to tap sharply and disperse the unlawful assembly, he looked over his shoulder and exclaimed—

"Boys, let ye go on dealin' out the cards while I say a few prayers!"

But that deal was never accomplished, and if the aves and paternosters were afterwards resumed it was by a more truly penitent man. The Connoughmore retainers had in getting a mistress found their master.

"O'Loughlin," said my lady one day when they were on speaking terms again, "I have determined that the breed of fowl here must be improved. The chickens are perfectly disgraceful. Their backs are like skates and their muscles like whipcord. I believe they are mismanaged from their birth. There is no reason why they should not be as well looked after here as in France, and become a mine of wealth to the peasantry. Why should they not be properly fattened and supply the London market?"

"Why not indeed," acquiesced Mr. O'Loughlin cheerfully.

"I have been studying a book on the subject," continued Lady Norreys, "and nothing can be simpler. I should like to begin at once, and have the chickens brought up under my own eye, on sweetened rice and sunflower seeds. Now how should I set about having a brood hatched with success?"

O'Loughlin scratched his corduroys meditatively. "You must borrow a hin," was his ultimatum.

"Nonsense! have we not plenty of hens of our own?" said my lady.

"There is flocks o' them. But they wouldn't have the same luck as one you'd be after borrowing?"

"Well, and what next?" asked my lady, deferring the loan question.

"You must steal some eggs," said O'Loughlin firmly.

But his mistress indignantly returned to her theoretical studies, and gave up for the moment the hope of carrying out a scheme which required such a felonious foundation.

Sir Gerald, and the ne'er-do-weel Master Albert, were walking up and down one of the garden paths, from which they could see the wooded hills beyond. Their cigar smoke invaded the atmosphere of lavender, and carnation, and mignonette. The subject was distasteful to both. Sir Gerald, impeiled by my lady's energy, found it a duty, against which his easy nature rebelled, to speak seriously to his nephew on the necessity of choosing a profession. Master Albert having no particular ambition to work while food and sport were within his daily reach, responded by asking pertinently enough what opening there was for a fellow without brains to pass a competitive examination, money to start farming with (the one idea in West Ireland for the investment of capital), or interest to secure a sinecure appointment. For the Nationalist members for the county could hardly be approached, as were the landlord nominees of old, with a request for "Government situations" for a majority of their supporters.

Both uncle and nephew were relieved by the approach of O'Loughlin, holding up in triumph a "ruffian of a rat" suspended from a steel trap.

"Well, we'll consult Myles; perhaps he can give us some new ideas," said Sir Gerald. "What would you say now, Myles, would be the best profession for a young fellow to take to in these days?"

"Profession is it?" answered Myles laying down his trophy and rubbing at his usual seat of inspiration, the leg of his corduroy breeches. "Well, there's some says one, and some says another; but I have in my mind what my grandfather used to be saying. There's three professions, says he, that you can't go wrong in. The one is to be a lawyer, for win or lose he must be paid. Or to be a doctor, for kill or cure he must be paid. An' the third is to be a priest, because heaven or hell, he must be paid too!"

And the old man, taking up the carcase of his slain foe, walked on, looking with paternal satisfaction on the fruit trees he had trained, and the vegetables he had raised this year as for sixty years past. His tall form, now a little bent, was clad in a frieze tail-coat, corduroy breeches and grey woollen stockings. A high hat, brown and fluffy, completed his costume. The red pocket-handkerchief, peeping from one of his coat-tails, occasionally did duty as head-gear, but was never put to the use for which it was manufactured.

But in his own province, the kitchen-garden, Myles O'Loughlin could challenge criticism. The frosts of spring and the blights of summer were baffled by his skill, and no peaches or pears in the county were to be compared with his.

He found my lady looking in the long vinery for some decorative plants for her drawing-room. These were not O'Loughlin's strong point, but a new innovation. He had lately indeed been in disgrace for having brought into the kitchen some samples of a collection of begonia tubers, just arrived, to be experimentally cooked.

"What are you growing this common ivy in a pot for?" she called out to him. "Goodness knows there is enough of it outside loosening the slates, and displacing the window frames of every shed in the yard."

The old man looked uneasily at the pot which had been dragged to light from a dusky corner.

"Well, I'll tell your honour no lie about it," he said apologetically. "It's Mike Cloran's sister that's goin' to her aunt in New York, an' she asked would I have any message to send to my little girl out there. An' I planted this little root in the pot three weeks ago, to let it get a grip o' the clay before it 'ud take the voyage. An' when she gets it I'll know that in whatever place she may be she won't be without a green leaf from Ireland an' a bit of Irish earth!"

His children had all left him, save one daughter, for America, the Land of Promise, but some had come back from the hard work and hard weather there, with minds more at rest for having made the "grand tour."

He had married—as is not uncommon—in his teens. But it had not been a marriage arranged in the usual way by priests and parents. A grey-eyed girl, one of the Joyce tribe, had come from her own country beyond Lough Corrib to help in the Connoughmore kitchen when the century was young. She was needed at home after a time,

and went back there. But after she had left, whispering tongues set a report going that it was by reason of young O'Loughlin she had been obliged to leave, and that she and the handsome garden lad had been too much together.

When Myles O'Loughlin first heard the slanderous rumour he struck the sneering bearer of it across the mouth. Then he took his week's wages, and next morning put on his Holyday clothes and walked straight off towards the blue hills of the Joyce country. Within a fortnight he had returned, and on Sunday he proudly brought the grey-eyed Connemara girl to mass and presented her as his bride. She made him a good wife and bore him sons and daughters; yet to the day of her death the neighbours never quite warmed to her; not looking on her as one of their own race, and she had pined a little for her own mountains.

Lady Norreys was told one morning that news had come to old O'Loughlin from America that his son was dead. Her kindliness awoke and she went to look for him.

She found him sitting over the turf fire in his room smoking "a blast o' tobacco." He would have been happier doing his usual work, but respect for the distant dead made him lay down his tools for the day. He handed her the large thin sheets written by his lost son's wife telling of the end.

"Your ladyship might be so kind as to sound it out for me," he said. "I'm not rightly sure did I grip the sense of it."

She read the blurred pages aloud, and tears trickled down the lines in his hollow cheeks as he heard details of the fatal illness. "God bless her, it's well she earned him," he said at the end.

My lady offered to write an answer from his dictation. Having discovered that the "boy" had left no children and had been well-to-do, having kept a store, and also been in receipt of a pension as an ex-Federal soldier, she suggested asking the widow if there was anything to be spared for the struggling sisters at home. But the old man shook his head thoughtfully. "'Twould be well to ask her that another time," he decided. "Sure what the boy left he'd surely like his sisters to have a share of. But she cared him well, and it's fretting after him she is now, an' in this letter I b'lieve we'd better say nothing at all, only praising her."

It was some time after this that my lady, on the war-path one morning, descended by the back stairs, and from a window which looked out on the yard beheld her special hate of hates, a professional beggar with tattered garments, mysterious pack, and unshaven face. One foot was bare, the other shod with a heavy brogue. Myles O'Loughlin was in the forbidden act of dispensing hospitality to him, putting a lump of bread and of cold bacon into his receptive hands. "Mebbe I could find an old pair of brogues for you," she heard him say. "Sure the roads do be hard for a man to walk barefoot."

"My blessing an' the blessing of God be on you, an' may you be

dividing it in your own house this day ten year," cried the tramp as he pushed the food away in his sack. "But as for boots, the Lord be praised, I haven't worn but the one this twenty year. Sure it was in the famine time, an' I had great hardship, an' I did be starving many a time, an' I thought to go to the Protestant clergy where they might relieve me. An' one Sunday I watched till they wor all gone into the church in Oughtamara, an' I went up the steps for to go in, an' I put my right foot across the threshold. An' then the thought o' the priest an' of Purgatory came before me, an' that the blessed saints 'ud intercede for me no more. So out I came again, no richer than I went in. But the foot that was so forward to go in among the jumpers, I gave it cruelty ever since, and sorra boot or shoe will I put on it till the day I die."

O'Loughlin listened approvingly and stood his ground when my lady's sudden descent put the itinerant martyr to flight.

"O'Loughlin," she said severely, "I have already told you that giving to beggars is against the rules of this establishment. The public rates provide for their exemption from starvation, and once for all, those who encourage them on the premises may look forward within measurable time of themselves joining their ranks."

Old Myles listened deferentially.

"Your ladyship knows best," he said. "An' it's not for the likes of me to set up an opinion against the likes of yourself. It's little profit they are, them tramps, walking the country, an' no benefit of them wherever they go. But there's a thing in my mind makes me be charitable in spite of all. One time when I was but a little gossoon I was in Galway at a fair along with my father. An' I went into a shop where he gave me a penny for myself for to buy a few crackers. An' while I was eating them within, for the day was soft an' I thought to keep myself in shelter while I could, in came a red-haired woman an' rattled her stick on the counter an', 'Gimme a copper, ma'am,' says she, 'for the honour o' God.' With that the decent woman that kept the shop handed her a penny an' a bit o' sweet cake, and away with her with sorra much thanks. 'I wonder at you, ma'am, to be so ready,' says a farming man that was just after buying a loaf o' white bread. 'Sure, that's none of our own people, but a stranger from the South. It's best to keep our charity for them that wants it at home.' 'That's so,' says she, 'an' I don't like the looks o' that one much, but what can I do? Sure,' says she, her eyes shining like the stars, 'I dare not refuse any, lest wan might be the Christ.' An' she made the sign of the Cross, an' the farming man, he says no more."

O'Loughlin had taken his hat off and looked upwards. Neither did my lady say any more, but opportunely retreated at the sound of the breakfast bell.

With autumn days came a cloud on the Connoughmore estate; a girl, a widow's daughter with the face of Burne Jones's "Beggar Maid," had got into trouble and a child was born. The stain on the

morality of the parish was felt to be a deep one, so unusual is such a scandal. The little roadside cabin of the widow might have belonged to the family of a land-grabber, or of a policeman killed on duty, so completely was it avoided and its inmates shunned.

Lady Norreys heard pityingly of this, and sent, by the doctor, food and money. He came to tell her of the gratitude her help had called forth, and how sorely it had been needed. The old mother was too infirm to go out, and during the unhappy girl's illness they would have been quite destitute but for the merciful succour of one neighbour. Old O'Loughlin had every evening faced public opinion and a tiring walk after his day's work, and had carried them milk and other comforts.

Lady Norreys was touched and pleased, and mentally forgave the old man his latest crime, that of having stuck a candle in the button-hole of the new coachman's livery coat, which hung conveniently on the harness-room door at a time when he wanted a light, and his candle-stick had "gone astray."

When she met him she said, in a gentler tone than he had yet heard her use—

"I am glad to hear, O'Loughlin, that you showed some pity to that poor girl when everyone else had deserted her."

"Well, your ladyship," said the old man with quiet solemnity, "she brought disgrace on the property sure enough, an' you couldn't blame the neighbours to be angry. But I had a feel within me that if our Lord Jesus was back on earth, it's what He would have done Himself, to go and help her."

But the autumn leaves were still falling, and the dahlias flaunting their purple and gold in defiance of coming frosts, when the old gardener had to give up his daily round of so many years. He caught a chill and had to stay indoors. It seemed as if his lately-lost son was beckoning him to the unseen country, for his hold on life appeared suddenly to be loosened.

My lady, half surprised at her own anxiety, visited and brought the doctor to him constantly, but she saw that his strength was ebbing away. She was looking through a book on invalid cookery one afternoon, when a message came, asking if she would come and see the old man. A little surprised, for she had spent much of the morning with him, she hastened downstairs.

"Not that way, my lady, he's out in the yard," said one of the servants who was watching for her.

"In the yard! nonsense," she exclaimed.

But she was quite unprepared for the sight that met her eyes outside. A common cart with rough unpainted shafts stood there. A feather bed had been laid upon it, with a few bundles and some hay. On the bed, his head supported on his daughter's knee, lay Myles O'Loughlin. His frieze coat was half covered by a blanket, and the old red handkerchief crowned his pallid face. His wasted bony hands lay on the coverlet, grasping at it as if for support.

Lady Norreys was shocked at the apparition of the dying man in the cold daylight.

"What does this mean?" she asked Katy, indignantly. "How could you allow your father to leave his bed?"

"Sure, 'twas himself that done it," answered the girl weeping, "and all Connaught wouldn't have held him. It's afraid he was of being a trouble to the family."

"That's so," said the old man huskily, trying to raise his head. "Saving your ladyship's presence, the doctor said, 'O'Loughlin,' says he, 'I'm afeared you're swept.' 'If that's so, doctor,' says I, 'tell me how much time have I before me.' 'Well, I'll hardly promise you to see Sunday next,' says he, 'but don't fret yourself, you'll die fair an' aisy, and you'll have a good burial, for there's not a man in the four parishes that's more respected than yourself.' 'Sorra fret, doctor,' says I, 'God is good, an' my little girl that died is praying for me in heaven this ten year.' An' when he was gone out the door I called to Katy an' bid her get the cart ready an' put the clothes on me, for, says I, I never'll stop to be a trouble to the English lady; I'll go die in the house of my first cousin John O'Hagan, where they won't mind me being in the house at all."

His voice had sunk to a whisper. Lady Norreys, tears in her eyes, came closer and took his worn hand.

"You must not go away, Myles," she said. "Stay here, and we will all do our best to cure you."

He shook his head feebly. "God bless you, my lady; if care could cure me, it's well you earned me; but no man or woman can do that for me now. An' I'd be loath to be troublesome at the last, for your ladyship is strange to the ways of the country; an' there'll be the wake, an' after that the burial, an' maybe some of the boys might be taking a drop too much, an' rising too much noise or the like! No, ma'am; I'm better away, an' sure it's all on the road to the Abbey, where the best man o' my family is buried."

With feeble stateliness he signed for the cart to move on, and shut his eyes resolutely that they might betray no sign of suffering, as his rough and jolting chariot bore him away to the unknown.

* * * * *

A month later, on one of the mild and spring-like days which November brings to the West, Lady Norreys and the "English quality," her guests, set out on an expedition.

They drove through many miles of the wind-swept and rock-strewn country that lies between Connoughmore and the Atlantic. A long and desolate drive, but at last they reached their goal, an old abbey in the Barren Hills. Its ruined walls and grey pillars looked as if hewn out of the stony mountain that surrounds it. Exquisitely carved capitals reproduce the form of the harebells, which in summer-time add a touch of blue to the universal grey. One of the visitors had wished to see these, and to study the architecture of a ruin "so

lightly, delicately built" in the midst of such a wild and savage scene.

Lady Norreys, however, had another reason for making the long pilgrimage. There was now a very soft spot in her heart for the old man who had gone away to die that his death might be "no trouble to the English lady." She was anxious that a slab should mark his resting-place and tell of his long and faithful service. She wished to see if the place where he was laid could lend any suggestion as to its design.

With the help of her nephew Albert, still one of the unemployed, she found the newly-made grave. She stood by it, a touch of remorse sharpening her regret as she thought of the promise she had extorted that this winter should end his service in her husband's house. Close by, in a recess of the lichened wall, she noticed a recumbent figure carved roughly in the grey limestone. The features were almost worn away, but there was something of dignity in the stone pillowed head and tunic-clad figure lying undisturbed in that silent rock-bound wilderness. The words underneath were legible, "O'Loughlin, King of Barren." She stood and mused for a time beside it, an irritating flash of memory bringing before her a richly decorated monument at Putney to a late eminent owner of silver mines.

"So this is 'the best man of his family,'" she murmured to herself. "I had found out long ago that he was one of Nature's gentlemen, but I think they might have told me that he was descended from a king."

SPRING.

"And in green underwood and cover blossom by blossom the spring begins."

SPRING! and the grass takes on its tend'rest hue;
All the birds sing, "Winter is gone, is gone;"
And never, surely, has the sun so shone,
Urging the trees to burst to leaf anew.
O Spring! these lovely buds are thine which strew
These quiet mossy places—all thine own
That lark's inspired love-lyric: thine alone
The wind-swept sky's unspeakable pale blue.

O Spring! thy spirit is the glorious word
Which we can only guess at here below,
For eye hath never seen nor ear hath heard
The things which those who share it see and know.
Yet, as at first in Eden, every tree
And grass-blade breathes of Immortality.

NORAH M'CORMICK.

JUNCTION JACK.

THERE was a stir in the camp at Niger's Creek, and some five or six men were busy with their arms and the accoutrements of their horses in preparation for a couple of days' hard riding. It was the habit of the camp to turn out to see the start, no matter whether the expedition were of limited or of general interest. In the present case it was certainly a secret, and probably a desperate one, its object being unknown to the community in general, and round about the busy centre of shouting men and plunging horses lounged knots of the "boys," mostly in shirt-sleeves, and in their customary unshaven and unkempt condition, puffing at short pipes and criticising audibly the points of men and animals during the various stages of preparation.

The little band of five or six men comprised the desperadoes of Niger's Creek—what community is there which does not number a few amongst its members?

Fortune had dealt hardly with the camp of late. Not for many months had the winning card turned up for a single member, and the men were simply at their wits' end and ready for almost any deed of daring. By a strange combination of circumstances, which it is not necessary to relate here, a piece of intelligence of the kind usually kept a profound secret had come to the ears of one of the men. The mail train of the D—— and R—— run on Thursday night was to carry specie to a large amount. At a certain point the mail overtook a freight train which had to be switched off to a siding running for some distance beside the level; this junction was in the keeping of a single man.

Now Niger's Creek was just in the mood to carry out the most villainous plot ever conceived.

They were agreed that to let such a chance slip in the present state of affairs would be suicidal; they therefore resolved that in order to gain possession of this rich prize, which would float them and set them on their legs again, the simplest and the easiest plan would be to wreck the mail train by permitting it to collide with the other at the junction, and in the confusion, when all attention would no doubt be centered on the injured passengers, to make off with the booty.

To do this safely "Junction Jack," as the switch-tender was called, must be tampered with—he must by fair means or foul be kept from his post that night; how it was to be done no man stopped to consider, but it may well be conceived that very nice notions of duty or of the value of human life were not rife amongst those who could devise an enterprise of this nature. They were quite ready to believe that the switch-tender only wanted a sufficiently tempting bribe to entice him from the path of duty; if not—and there were ugly looks all round—other means of silencing him were at their disposal.

The log-cabin of Junction Jack stood quite close to the line, and was a low, roughly-built structure consisting of two rooms. It was in the centre of a small clearing, where some attempt at order was observable; vegetables were arranged in neat rows, and one small patch in front was dedicated to the cultivation of such simple flowers as one may see any day growing wild.

It was the early part of the fall. All through the long summer Jack had devoted his spare time to the putting up of his new log-house. Every block was hewn and firmly fastened together, the roughly-glazed windows put in, the smart picket round the clearing set up—all by his own hands—and with a will, for at Christmas he was to marry Margie Dewar. He had just finished rigging up a set of shelves for Margie's books and work; three shelves in a niche beside the stove; and when he had driven home the last nail he stepped back and looked at his work, whistling softly.

Then he crossed the floor to an old locker and brought out half-a-dozen thumbed and well-worn books; the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,' a well-worn Bible and Prayer Book bound together in a faded green cover, and a couple of volumes of Dickens which had found their way across the Atlantic to this remote spot.

Having arranged these to his satisfaction, after changing their position several times and looking at the whole from different points of view, Jack heaved a sigh of content from the depths of his capacious chest, unrolled his shirt-sleeves and shook himself into his jacket. He then made up the fire, broiled himself a slice of pork and sat down to his lonely supper—a thing he never did without a rapid mental calculation of the number of days that must elapse before the sweet face of Margie Dewar would confront him on the other side of the stove.

A couple of miles away down the line stood the substantial homestead of the Dewar family, and about half-way between this and his cabin was a little hut beside the track just large enough to shelter him from wind and rain in the performance of his duty. At nine o'clock every night he was there at his post listening for the rumbling of the heavy cars, which could be heard in that pure atmosphere long before they came in sight; and it was Junction Jack's important office to clear the road for the safe transit of the mail which followed close on the heels of her slow and cumbersome sister; for the safety of both trains he and he alone was responsible, and it was the most interesting duty of his dull and monotonous routine.

He led a lonely life, for beyond an occasional "Good night, mate!" from the locomotive drivers, Junction Jack held but little communication with his fellows, his instructions with his pay being transmitted weekly through the conductor of the freight train, who, in passing, flung the package containing these at Jack's feet; he was stationed fully fifty miles from the nearest depôt, no such surprising fact when

we remember that the track runs for a thousand miles and more through the forests and prairies of the Far West.

Jack was a fine broad-shouldered fellow, true to his post, and all of his big heart that wasn't given up to his duty was enslaved by Margie, and he would not have changed places with the President.

Well, Margie was a girl to be proud of. There is a simple daguerreotype on the shelf, of a vastly inferior kind, and executed by a wandering artist. Look at the soft eyes, the sunny face and bright hair framed in a cunning little pink calico bonnet. Junction Jack looked again and again as he sat there, and he heaved another big sigh of satisfaction every time.

His simple meal finished, he began to prepare for his walk down the line to the Junction. This spot was sacred to the lonely man's one romance; here Margie had promised to be his; here Margie had given him shyly the first kiss, the remembrance of which thrilled him still; here they had met evening after evening all the summer through to discuss the progress of the log cabin and their plans for the future.

Would Jack and Margie meet to-night as usual?

Jack hadn't a doubt of it; he had raked together the ashes, lighted the lamp which he always left burning, and set it on the window-ledge, when a sound of footsteps fell on his ear. He strode to the door, and was confronted on the threshold by a man, dusty and travel-stained, who unceremoniously entered the cabin, seated himself uninvited by the stove, and began to knock the ashes out of his pipe. He was armed and fully equipped for riding; while the lower part of his face was covered by a dark beard, his eyes and forehead were almost hidden by a wide hat drawn low over them.

Jack turned a little reluctantly—his lonely life had not rendered him very sociable and hospitable to strangers.

"Been riding far?" he inquired.

"A matter of a few miles," replied the visitor carelessly, lighting his pipe and beginning to smoke. "Anything to drink handy?"

Jack set the whiskey bottle and a glass before him, and asked:

"Going on to-night?"

"Maybe I am," said the stranger; and then looking up at his host: "Where are you off to in such a hurry? Sit down, man! I want a talk with you!"

"Then short and sharp's the word," said Jack, good-humouredly, sitting down on a barrel. "I've a bit of work down yonder that won't wait!"

"You may as well let it be at this hour of night; it's time for a pipe and a glass of this good stuff, man!"

Jack turned round; he had risen, and was half-way to the door.

"Perhaps," said the stranger, looking at him keenly, "perhaps it might be worth your while not to go down to that same bit of work to-night!"

"D'you know what you're talking about?" demanded Jack angrily, roused by something in the other's manner. "It's a matter of life and death, I tell you, and I'm off! I'll sit with you as long as you like when I'm through—stop till I come back if you choose!"

The stranger rose to his feet coolly. "Then you'll lose the best bit of work you ever did in your life, my man! And all—I reckon I can see as far as most men—all for a word with the owner of this pretty face here," and he reached up for the little portrait on the mantel-shelf.

Jack was at the door, but he strode back at this.

"Hands off!" cried the stranger. "I can have a look at it, I suppose, or any other man?"

Jack stood savagely silent; there was no valid reason for his objection to have Margie's beauty admired by this cool and unceremonious visitor.

"What's your business with me?" he demanded at last. "Out with it quick! I want to be off!"

The other removed his pipe before he answered slowly:

"Well, I guess I won't waste ammunition by firing any more in the air!" He hesitated a moment, fixing his eye on Jack. "There's money in it—a clean three or four thousand for you and me and some others—if—you'll stop away from the Junction to-night!"

"What d'you mean?" asked Jack again. "Do you know there's wholesale murder in the plan you're proposing?"

The stranger shrugged his shoulders carelessly. "Look here, my man! I'll make it all square for you. I've got something here which will make you sleep like the dead till morning—or, if you don't take to that dodge, why, once out of this, as we shall all be by dawn—come, give us your fist on it!" and he advanced with an air of cordiality.

But Jack started back as if he had been shot. The hideousness of the proposition dawned on him and turned his blood to fire. Snatching his derringer from the mantel-shelf—

"Stand off!" he shouted, "or I'll put a bullet into you! Whoever you are, if there's law in the country, you shall swing for this!"

The other remained outwardly calm, and there was an ominous gleam in his eye. He made no answer, but raised his hand quickly—a signal agreed on—for with a crash of glass, the barrel of a rifle protruded through the window, covering Jack's movements, and a hoarse voice shouted from the darkness without—

"Blaze away, Captain! I told ye the fellow would show fight!"

Jack sprang back to the wall and stood firm against it, his great chest heaving, his grey eyes flashing, and lips set together. A howl of execration followed, and then the men of Niger's Creek poured into the cabin.

Meanwhile at the farm the evening meal had been cleared away, and Margie, free from household duties, was engaged in the essentially

feminine occupation of tying the strings of her bonnet before the little oval mirror, which hung on the wall, and reflected her features somewhat imperfectly—for plate-glass was unknown in these regions. Then she stepped through the porch where the rosy flush of the sunset enveloped her, lending a tender bloom to her cheek, and a dewy brightness to her eyes.

Margie Dewar was no beauty, in the common acceptation of the term; in a Boston drawing-room she would probably have passed unnoticed, for there was not a perfect feature in her face. But she was the daughter of the sunshine and the fragrant breeze, and many a city belle would have envied her the clear pink and white of her complexion, the strength and grace of her perfectly-proportioned figure, the dainty poise of her head, the lightness and freedom of her footstep, and the sweetness of her winning smile—outcome of her simple life and pure and happy thoughts!

Through the yard she walked where the feathered creatures fluttered round looking for something from her hand—through the field of ripening grain, and then turned into the little track beside the line. And here she quickened her steps, one brown hand shading her eyes, as she looked expectantly up the line, though she knew well, foolish Margie! that she could not see Jack yet.

The sun had dipped behind the distant ridge, the red glow had changed to purple, and was darkening every instant into deeper shadow, when Margie reached the Junction.

She had to peer close into the little hut before she could be certain it was empty. She brought out the lantern, lighted it, and hung it on a post as she had seen Jack do many times, then she sat down on the bank where he had carved a rough seat in the brown earth and lined it with velvet moss for her. She clasped her hands round her knees and bent her face on them, singing softly to herself, and the tones of her fresh young voice mingled with the hum of insects, while all the still air of the coming night was fragrant with the sweet scent of herb and flower.

How long she sat there she knew not; but at last she lifted her head to listen to a distant rumbling.

An instant of suspense and Margie leaped to her feet. She knew the sound well—it was the train—and Junction Jack, for the first time in his years of service, was away from his post.

The girl prang down the bank, striving to pierce the gloom. No Jack was to be seen, but there were the headlights of the advancing train, fast nearing the Junction. What was she to do? She knew well that the express was due in a few moments and a terrible collision was inevitable.

There was only a moment of indecision. Margie was accustomed to emergencies and the necessity for immediate action—she remembered how often she had watched Jack at his duty, and now she flung herself on the great switch handles and pressed them down with all her strength.

Only just in time, for the next moment the heavy freight train was rolling past—she held on till the last car had passed her, and she saw its receding lights swing off on to the siding. Her work was done, for the train was saved, and her grasp loosened, the heavy handles turned slowly back, and she stood cold and trembling now that the moment of exertion was over.

The distant rumbling ceased and only the occasional cry of a night-bird broke the stillness, while Margie stood motionless, her brain busy with conjecture, her heart beating with a thousand apprehensions for her lover. And suddenly with a shriek and a wild rush the mail thundered up, past the junction—on, past the silent log-house—and away in the far distance leaving a long trail of wreathing vapour in its wake.

Then Margie, stirred into action by the swift rush of the wheels and the panting breath of the flying locomotive, snatched up the lantern and sped down the track.

In sight of the still dark cabin she stopped and uttered a peculiar cry, but the sound fell on deaf ears, and no answer came from him who was used to respond so gladly—and Margie, nameless terrors oppressing her, sprang on and burst open the door.

The light of her lantern showed her the cabin in wild disorder, and there Jack lay, bound and helpless—his head fallen inert among the ashes of the stove, and the dark blood ebbing slowly from an ugly wound.

Margie was no fainting heroine to be unnerved at the sight of blood, but she could not repress a sob as she knelt at his side, cut his bonds with fingers that never trembled, and lifting his head to the support of her arm began to feel for the signs of life. And her touch roused him. He opened his dull eyes and tried to raise himself, whispering faintly: "God bless you, Margie! Did you—save—the——" Then his eyes closed again and his head dropped.

But Junction Jack didn't die, for youth and hope and courage will work wonders. All through that long, long night did Margie staunch the ebbing life-blood, and lifting him in her strong young arms with tender care, did she try to inspire his sinking frame with the life of her own bounding pulses. As the first grey streak of dawn gleamed through the shattered casement hasty steps approached the cabin and the girl's lonely watch was over.

Carried carefully to the farm, Jack found kind and capable nurses there, and at Christmas he was strong and well as ever when the minister came to join his hands and Margie's. And the log-house, enlarged and substantially rebuilt—its owner prosperous with the reward that was voted him for his bravery—is peopled with a merry company of little folks who with sweet young voices love to tell the tale "How mother saved the mail and father too!"

EVELYN MOORE.

LAND AND SEA.

Ballade.

When through deep summer lanes I tread,
Wild briar-roses on each hand,
Flushing and paling white and red,
I'll sing the beauties of the land.
On lonely shores majestic, grand,
Where curling waves dash fierce and free,
Foaming and breaking on the strand,
I'll sound the praises of the sea.

When daisied meadows round me spread,
And kine knee-deep in sorrel stand,
And larks soar thrilling overhead,
I'll sing the beauties of the land.
When o'er wide wastes of level sand,
The plaintive note is borne to me
Of curlews wheeling in a band,
I'll sound the praises of the sea.

When silvery gleams the lily-bed
In moonlit gardens zephyr-fanned,
And love in lover's eyes is read,
I'll sing the beauties of the land.
When emerald waters vast are spanned
By rainbow arc ere daylight flee,
And flying sails by us are scanned,
I'll sound the praises of the sea.

Envoy.

Lady, with joy at thy command,
I'll sing the beauties of the land;
But if it more will pleasure thee
I'll sound the praises of the sea.

E. Leith.

"Lady Pell, last night I saw the Grey Brother."

THE ARGOSY.

AUGUST, 1894.

THE GREY MONK.

By T. W. Speight, Author of "The Mysteries of Heron Dyke."

CHAPTER XXX.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

IT was evident that Sir Gilbert Clare was very much put out by the scene just enacted on the terrace. As soon as the last of the servants had gone back indoors he re-entered the drawing-room, where Trant now proceeded to light the centre lamp and the candles in the girandoles, and resumed his seat by Lady Pell. Luigi and Ethel, at the opposite end of the long room, were engaged in turning over a book of foreign photographs. He was always glad to put as wide a space as possible between his "grandfather" and himself, and she had tact enough to be aware that after so untoward an interruption, the baronet might not be in the humour for any more music.

"Now, who," said Sir Gilbert, "can have put the notion into that silly girl's head about the so-called Grey Brother? (Of course *you* know the family legend, Louisa.) She has only been about half-a-year in my service, and, if I remember aright, she came to us all the way from Sussex."

"But she did not mention the Grey Brother by name, did she?" queried her ladyship. "As I understood her, what she said was, that when opposite the drawing-room windows she was confronted by a tall, dark, hooded figure—nothing more specific than that."

"And what could such a description refer to, pray, except to the Grey Brother? I suppose that in the servants' hall such legends die hard, and that any story, or incident which savours of the supernatural, is handed down from one generation of domestics to another. If we could get to the bottom of the affair, I have no doubt we should

find that this Sussex girl has had the legend recounted to her by somebody, and that it so impressed her imagination that the first time she finds herself alone in the grounds in the dusk of evening, she is prepared to distort every queer-looking shrub or bush into a semblance of the family apparition, and, indeed, would feel herself rather aggrieved than otherwise should it fail to appear to her. You may rely upon it, that girl Ogden will be the heroine of the servants' hall for half a year to come."

"Still, it seems clear to me that she saw *something*. I never witnessed a more genuine case of fright. But of course the question is what that something was."

"Had there been a moon, I should have said that what frightened her was nothing more substantial than her own shadow. In all likelihood it was a poacher, or a tramp, or some other vagabond who was prowling about where he had no business to be. And that reminds me of something."

He rose and rang the bell, and then to Trant, who responded to the summons, he said: "Send for Bostock, and bid him and his man keep a sharp look-out to-night. I have reason to suppose that there are one or more bad characters lurking about the grounds."

Bostock was the keeper who, some years before, had succeeded Martin Rigg, the latter having been permanently disabled in a poaching affray. Martin Rigg, it may be remembered, was the last to bid God-speed to Alec Clare on that night when Sir Gilbert pronounced sentence of banishment on his eldest son.

"I presume from what you said just now," remarked Lady Pell when Trant had come and gone, "that of late years you have not been troubled by any of these visitations, or appearances, or whatever is the proper term for them?"

"Not for twenty years, or more, so that I felt myself justified in hoping that the Grey Brother had died a natural death and been buried out of sight for ever. Now I come to think, it was a little while before Alec left home—um—um—for the last time that we were bothered and annoyed with quite a series of appearances, or what were said to be such."

"Ah, poor Alec—poor boy—what a fate was his!" exclaimed her ladyship with a sigh. "The apparition has never manifested itself to you, Cousin Gilbert?"

"Certainly not," replied Sir Gilbert with emphasis. "Nor to my father before me. My mother *fancied* that she caught a glimpse of the figure on several occasions, not outside the house where it is generally said to be seen, but indoors, in the picture-gallery, or on the stairs, or elsewhere; but she was an excitable woman—excitable in more ways than one—and my father always pooh-poohed her statements of what she professed to have seen as so many hallucinations, although, as a matter of course, he wholly failed in converting her to his own point of view."

Next morning, on coming down to breakfast, Lady Pell found by her plate a black-bordered letter bearing a French postmark. At sight of it she exclaimed: "Then the poor child is dead! What a pity! And he was the only grandson."

Sir Gilbert, who was already seated at table, glanced inquiringly at her.

"I think I told you," she said in answer to the look, "that it was originally my intention, after leaving the Shrublands, to have gone direct to France, there to stay till well on for Christmas with a very old friend of mine, indeed, the only one of my school companions whose friendship I have retained till now. On the eve of starting I received a letter from Julie in which she asked me, in consequence of her grandson's illness, to put off my visit till I should hear from her again. It was merely a feverish cold, she wrote, and not the slightest danger was apprehended. But this black-bordered missive, even before I open it, tells me but too surely what has happened."

She said no more, but opened the letter. Tears were in her eyes when she laid it down a couple of minutes later. For awhile the meal progressed in silence.

Sir Gilbert was the first to speak. "Am I right, Louisa, in supposing that, owing to your friend's loss, your visit to France will have to be postponed indefinitely?" he asked.

"Postponed till spring undoubtedly. Madame de Bellecour presses me to go after a week or two, but at such a time I should feel myself little better than an intruder."

"In that case there can be no valid reason why you should not prolong your visit at the Chase, and give to us the time you originally intended to devote to your friend in France."

Lady Pell in the act of helping herself to sugar considered for a few moments. Then she said: "Thank you for your offer, Cousin Gilbert. I will think it over and let you know my decision later on."

After breakfast Lady Pell went to her room to write some letters. At such times, as Ethel was aware, she preferred to be alone. So, it being one of those lovely autumn mornings which are among the choicest of the year, Ethel put on her hat and quitted the house with the intention of exploring the grounds, and making herself better acquainted with the Chase and its surroundings.

What the uppermost subject in her thoughts was as she went sauntering along, careless whether she took this path or the other, she was never afterwards able to remember. All she knew was that she was softly crooning a lately-learnt ballad which had taken her fancy, and that she felt quietly and sunnily happy, when all at once, without an instant's warning, and unknown to herself, she touched the turning-point of her destiny.

Ethel, who had stopped in her walk, in order to inhale the fragrance of some late-blooming roses, hearing the sound of approaching footsteps on the gravel, turned her head to see who was coming, and

a moment later, round a clump of evergreens, appeared the unforgotten face and figure of Everard Lisle, who was on his way to his daily duties at the Chase.

The two were within a dozen yards of each other, and the moment Lisle's eyes fell on Ethel, he came to an abrupt halt, paralysed as it were by sheer amazement. Ethel's heart seemed to stop beating for an instant or two, and then went on with a bound, while a lovely flush suffused her face and throat, and seemed to tingle down to her very finger-tips. Everard, on the contrary, had turned almost as pale as a corpse. Ordinarily one of the most self-possessed of men, he had now to draw three or four laboured breaths before a word would come.

After all, it was Ethel who first broke the silence. She advanced a little way and held out her hand with a smile which to Everard seemed little less than heavenly. "And is it really you, Mr. Lisle?" she said. "I could scarcely believe at first that my eyes were not playing me false. Withington Chase was the place, was it not, to which you told me you had come when—when I saw you last? But I only heard the name once, and that must be my excuse for having forgotten it. In any case, I am very glad to meet you again. It is only three weeks since I left dear St. Oswyth's, and yet when I look back it seems like an age."

By this time Lisle had hold of her hand, which he seemed in no hurry to release.

"Yes, this is my home, Miss Ethel, and has been ever since I left my father's roof. Not the Chase itself, mind you," he smilingly added, "but a much humbler domicile just beyond the park. Sir Gilbert and my father were at the same college somewhere about half a century ago, so when the former found himself in want of an assistant—a sort of half secretary and half bailiff—he called to mind the fact that the man whose good fortune it had been in years gone by to save his life, and whom he had never quite lost sight of since, had a son, and offered him the post. And now that I have told you so much about myself, allow me to ask, in the name of all that's wonderful, how I happen to find you here?"

"Oh, there's nothing in the least wonderful about that," replied Ethel, who by this time had regained possession of her hand. "I am here as companion, for the time being, to Lady Pell, who is a relative of Sir Gilbert. Of course you have heard that my dear aunts have lost the greater part of their fortune and have been compelled to leave their old home?" Everard nodded. "Well, through Lady Pell, my aunts obtained a tenant for Vale View House in the person of her stepdaughter, and that was how she and they became acquainted. Her companion being away on account of illness, I am filling the position *pro tem.*"

"I hope Lady Pell intends making a long stay at the Chase."

"She came, intending to stay only a couple of days, but, as the

result of a letter she received this morning, it seems not unlikely that her visit will be prolonged."

"With all my heart I hope it may," said Everard. There was a fervour in his voice, and a fire in his eyes, which brought back the glow to Ethel's cheeks and recalled, as though they related to an event of yesterday, every word and look of Lisle at that interview on her birthday, when he pleaded his suit with so much earnestness, but pleaded in vain. Well, Everard Lisle was not like some people.

Her heart whispered to her: "He loves you still. You are as dear to him at this moment as you ever were."

She did not speak, but turned away her head and gazed across the park.

"And now I must leave you—for the present," said Everard. "I have my morning's work to attend to, and Sir Gilbert likes punctuality in others if he does not always practise it himself. I often lunch and dine at the Chase. Let us hope that the presence of Lady Pell will not have the effect of depriving me of a privilege which I never valued so highly as I do at this moment."

He smiled, lifted his hat, and went his way.

CHAPTER XXXI.

LUIGI'S ESCAPADE.

Mr. Kinaby's dog-cart, now that the land-steward himself was almost wholly confined to the house, was at the service of Everard Lisle, and he generally made use of it, if the weather happened to be bad, when he was invited to dine at the Chase, thereby saving himself a long wet tramp there and back through the park.

To-day the fine forenoon had degenerated into a wet evening, and when Lisle had given his horse and trap into charge of the stable help and, after divesting himself of his wet mackintosh, had made his way to the drawing-room, he found there the Baronet, Lady Pell and Miss Thursby. Sir Gilbert, in his abrupt fashion, at once proceeded to introduce him to the ladies. After bowing to her ladyship, Everard held out his hand to Ethel, saying as he did so: "I have had the pleasure of meeting Miss Thursby on more than one occasion before to-day; in point of fact, we happen to come from the same town, St. Oswyth's."

"And a very charming, old-fashioned town it is," said her ladyship; "and some of the people, whose acquaintance I made there"—with a significant glance at Ethel—"I found to be quite as nice as the place."

At this moment Trant entered the room with the announcement that dinner was served. "That's all very well," said Sir Gilbert testily, "but what has become of my grandson? Where is Mr.

Lewis? Send up to his room at once, Trant, and tell him that dinner is waiting." Then turning to Lady Pell, he added: "I hate unpunctuality, especially at meal-times. It would serve the young dog right to make him go without his dinner."

"Is he often behind time?" queried her ladyship.

"No, I can't say that he is. He knows that I wouldn't put up with it."

"Then you can afford, for once in a way, to overlook his remissness. Besides, it would be unfair to blame him before hearing what he may have to say for himself."

"Oh, he'll have some plausible excuse or other, I don't doubt," growled Sir Gilbert. "You would be clever to catch him without one."

Trant reappeared. "Mr. Lewis is not in his room, Sir Gilbert. It seems that he left the house about ten o'clock, and has not been seen since."

Sir Gilbert's eyebrows came together in a frown. Then he shook himself, and forcing a smile, said: "In that case there is no need to wait. Perhaps they have persuaded him to stay and dine at the vicarage, although, when that has been the case before, he has always sent me word." With that he offered his arm to Lady Pell and Everard did the same to Miss Thursby.

When dinner was over there was no sitting out of doors as on the preceding evening. In the drawing-room, the lighted lamps, the drawn curtains and the wood fire, served as so many reminders of the dying year. This evening, out of compliment to her ladyship, Sir Gilbert forewent his usual game of chess. At his request Ethel played and sang for upwards of an hour, during which time it was Lisle's happy privilege to turn over her music and hover round her generally. Between whiles Sir Gilbert and her ladyship, who were seated considerably apart from the young people, conversed in low tones.

Ten o'clock struck all too soon for Everard Lisle. It was his appointed hour for leaving the Chase. When he had taken leave of the ladies, Sir Gilbert quitted the room with him. While the dog-cart was being brought round and he was inducting himself into his mackintosh, the baronet sent a servant to ascertain whether his grandson had yet reached home. No, Mr. Lewis was not in his room, neither had anyone seen him, was the word brought back. "I shall sit up for him, if it be till six o'clock in the morning," said Sir Gilbert grimly to Lisle. With that, he nodded a curt, but not unkindly good-night, and strode back to the drawing-room.

Sir Gilbert's words were in Everard's mind as he drove through the wind and the rain. What had become of young Clare? Where and by whom had he been detained? Could any harm have befallen him? He did not believe much in the likelihood of his being at the vicarage all these hours; nevertheless, he would drive round there,

although it would be more than a couple of miles out of his way, and should Clare chance to be there, he would give him a hint that the sooner he got back to the Chase the better it might be for him.

But the missing delinquent was not at the vicarage. He had left there at his usual hour, and of his after-movements neither Mr. nor Mrs. Merton had any knowledge. "What if he has found his way to the King's Head, and is still there?" said Everard to himself as the vicarage door was shut behind him. "In any case, it's a point worth settling;" and with that he turned his horse's head in the direction of Mapleford. Rumours of Luigi's frequent visits to the billiard-room of the hotel in question had come to Lisle's ears, for Mr. Lewis Clare, in virtue of his position as Sir Gilbert's grandson, was a personage of some consequence in the little town, and his comings and goings were not merely noted, but freely commented upon.

Everard's surmise proved to be correct. He found Luigi at the King's Head, but not in quite as sober a condition as he might have been. It was the birthday of Miss Jennings, the pretty barmaid, and it had seemed to him that the occasion was one which nothing less than champagne could do justice to. There were several other young men there who were of the same opinion as Mr. Clare—so long as the latter was willing to pay for the wine. The sudden apparition of Lisle turned Luigi cold from head to foot and had the effect of partially sobering him. He did not doubt for a moment that Sir Gilbert had sent for him, and his limbs shook under him as, without a word of farewell to his companions, he rose in obedience to Lisle's beckoning finger and followed him into the open air. "Your grandfather is sitting up for you," said Everard. "The longer you stay here, the longer you will keep him out of bed. Let me help you into the dogcart."

"I dare not face him," whimpered Luigi. "I'd almost sooner go and drown myself."

"But you can't stay here all night," urged Lisle. "You have been here far too long already, and I shall not go without taking you with me."

"He'll turn me out neck and crop, I know he will," moaned the other, with a clutch at Lisle's sleeve to enable him to keep his balance.

"Pooh! Don't be a coward. Sir Gilbert's bark, as you ought to know by this time, is far worse than his bite. He will give you a good jacketing, and serve you right, and there will be an end of it."

"Ah!—you don't know him; you think you do, but you don't," said Luigi with the intense gravity of semi-inebriety. "Yes, I'd almost sooner drown myself than face him," he whimpered for the second time.

He was indeed, as Everard could not help reflecting, in no condition to be seen by his grandfather. What was the best thing to do? He stood for a moment or two considering, and then he said: "If you like to stay at my place to-night, I will find you a bed. But in that case, after leaving you there, I must drive to the Chase, inform

Sir Gilbert where you are, and make the best excuse I can for your non-appearance."

"Lisle, you're a brick!" ejaculated Luigi, seizing Everard by both arms and making as though he would playfully shake him. "I've never liked you, you know, but to-night you've proved a regular brick. —Yes, that's the card—a shake-down at your place, and you to go and make my excuses to Granddad. Of course you'll know what to say. Suddenly taken ill on my road home—glad to take refuge anywhere—awfully sorry he's been put about—better already and hope to be all right by morning.—You know."

A sharp drive of twenty minutes brought them to Elm Lodge, Mr. Kinaby's house, where, by this time, everybody had retired for the night, for which Everard was not sorry. He let himself and his companion in by means of his latch-key. His intention had been to give up his bed to Luigi, but this the latter would by no means agree to, not through any unselfishness on his part, but because he felt that the trouble of undressing would be too much for him. "All I want and all I'll have is a snooze on a sofa," was his own way of putting it. Accordingly, Everard having provided him with a blanket and pillow, he kicked off his boots and stretched himself out on the couch in the sitting-room. Half a minute later he was fast asleep.

Everard, having turned down the lamp, left him. The dog-cart was waiting at the door, and ten minutes later he drew up at the main entrance to the park. Nixon, the lodge-keeper, was in bed and had to be knocked up. Leaving his horse and trap in the old man's charge, Lisle took a bee-line across the park in the direction of the house. On reaching the terrace he saw that the entire frontage was in darkness, except that the couple of lozenge-shaped openings, high up in the shutters of the study windows showed like two dim patches of yellow light. It was evident that the baronet was keeping his word and had not yet retired.

Going up to one of the windows, Lisle took a coin out of his pocket and tapped with it on the glass. For a man of his years, Sir Gilbert's hearing was still remarkably acute, and in less than a minute the shutter was unbolted and thrown back, and in his deepest tones came the question: "Who is there?" It was almost on such a night, some quarter of a century before, that Alec Clare had tapped at the same window, and he, Sir Gilbert, had put to him precisely the same question that he was putting now. He shivered as the fact recalled itself to his mind. A chill breath from the tomb seemed for a moment to lift his silvered locks.

"It is I—Everard Lisle," came the clear response.

With fingers that trembled somewhat, Sir Gilbert undid the window-fastenings, and Lisle stepped into the room.

"You have brought me tidings of Lewis?" was the old man's eager query.

"I have, Sir Gilbert. He is at my rooms at Elm Lodge. He is

not at all well, and I have persuaded him to stay where he is till morning, in the hope that by then he will have thoroughly recovered."

Sir Gilbert drew himself up to his full height and grasped the young man by one shoulder. "Lisle—um—um, you are trying to keep something from me," he said. "There is something in the background which you do not wish me to know. If it concerns my grandson, I *must* know it, and I look to you to answer my questions with that candour which up to now I have found to be one of your unfailing attributes. Tell me this: did you find my grandson at Elm Lodge on your arrival there after leaving here?"

"No, sir, I did not."

"Where did you find him?"

"I went in search of him and found him at a certain hotel in the town."

"So—so. And the worse for drink, hey?"

"He certainly had imbibed a little more wine than was good for him."

"I thought as much," was Sir Gilbert's stern rejoinder.

"This, perhaps, may be urged in extenuation, sir—that the occasion was a birthday-party—(Mr. Lewis was one among a lot more young men)—that he had had nothing to eat since breakfast, and that the very fact of his being unaccustomed to take much wine was the reason why what he had taken affected him as it did."

"You would make excuses for him, would you? Leave him to do that for himself, if you please. And what is the class of young men whom he chooses for his associates? Nothing better than common riff-raff, I'll be bound." Then all at once his voice broke. "And it is of my grandson—the last of the Clares—that these things are being said!"

Everard hardly knew whether to go or stay. A minute later, Sir Gilbert was himself again. "I am much obliged to you, Lisle," he said, "for the trouble you have taken in this wretched affair. Tell my grandson to come to me in the library at ten o'clock to-morrow. Till then I have no wish to set eyes on him."

When Everard got back to his rooms he found Luigi still sleeping soundly, and so left him for the night. But it was certainly a surprise to him when, on going down next morning between seven and eight o'clock, he found the room empty and his guest gone.

Shortly after daybreak Luigi had woke up with a splitting headache. As soon as he had pulled his wits together and called to mind where he was, he proceeded to empty the carafe of water which Lisle had considerately placed within his reach. Then he sat for a long time with his elbows on his knees and his face buried in his hands. His heart sank within him when he thought of the inevitable interview with his grandfather which could not much longer be delayed, for he had strong doubts as to the amount of credence Sir Gilbert would

accord to the story of his sudden illness. That he would be subjected to a severe wigging and have certain penalties of a more or less disagreeable kind imposed on him, he did not doubt; but he anticipated nothing worse than that. He had, however, another cause for disquietude which, as it seemed to him, might not improbably entail results far more dire. He was nearly sure that, in the course of the previous evening, he had made Miss Jennings an offer of his hand and heart, but whether she had accepted or repulsed him, or had merely treated his offer as a foolish joke, he could not for the life of him remember. But what if she had taken his offer seriously and, in the event of his repudiating it, which he would be absolutely bound to do, were to seek out his grandfather and pour her story into his ears! The consequences of her doing so were too terrifying to contemplate. "Oh, what an idiot I must have been!" he groaned more than once.

Somehow this morning he did not care to face Lisle; so, after a time he let himself out of the house and bent his steps towards the town. He entered the first hairdresser's shop he came to, where he had what is termed a "wash and brush-up," after which he felt considerably refreshed. Next to a chemist's where he called for and drank off at a draught a certain effervescing mixture which was warranted as an infallible "pick-me-up." After that he thought he would take a turn by the river and try to find an appetite for breakfast. Very careful was he not to go near the King's Head and Miss Jennings.

By this it was past nine o'clock and time for him to turn his face homeward. He had scarcely gone a dozen yards from the inn when he saw Mr. Kinaby's groom, whom he knew by sight, coming towards him on horseback. On nearing him the man reined up and carrying a finger to his forehead, said: "I've bin lookin' for you all over the town, sir. I've a note for you from Mr. Lisle."

Luigi took the note and tore it open. It was merely a line. "Your grandfather wants to see you in the library at ten o'clock.—E. L."

"All right," said Luigi with a nod to the man. "Tell Mr. Lisle it shall be attended to."

CHAPTER XXXII.

SIR GILBERT'S DECISION.

Luigi, as he turned the handle of the library door, felt that he would have given something to know what had passed between Lisle and his grandfather over-night. Had the former succeeded in convincing Sir Gilbert that his absence from home was due to a sudden attack of illness, or had he allowed his grandfather to become acquainted with the real facts of the case? His uncertainty on the point was dispelled by Sir Gilbert's first words.

"So, sir, you have recovered sufficiently from your last night's debauch to allow of your coming to see me," he said, taking him in through his contracted lids from head to foot.

Luigi's eyes fell and his knees trembled under him. As he said of himself afterwards, he felt "like a washed-out scarecrow." He tried to moisten his lips, but his tongue was as dry as they. His first thought was: "That scoundrel, Lisle, *did* sell me, after all! Not a bit of use now pretending I was ill."

Clearing his voice, he said: "I am very sorry, sir, that I was not able to get home yesterday in time for dinner. That I took more wine than was good for me I frankly admit. So little am I used to it that a very small quantity tells upon me. I don't know whether you are aware of it, sir, but the occasion was a birthday wine party to drink the health of young Jack Derrick."

"Jack whom did you say?" demanded Sir Gilbert, adding, *sotto voce:* "If the fellow would only stand up and face me like a man and not look so confoundedly cringing and obsequious, I could forgive him almost anything."

"Jack Derrick, sir, son of Colonel Derrick, he who has lately come to reside at Stanbrooke Grange."

Luigi had calculated that his lie was a tolerably safe one. He knew that the Colonel and Sir Gilbert had never met and that, in view of the secluded habits of the latter, there was little likelihood of their doing so. Besides, it was quite true that young Derrick, with whom, however, he was merely on nodding terms, had just come of age, but the rest of his statement was a pure invention. It was the health of Miss Jennings that had been drunk in creaming bumpers.

"Humph!" said Sir Gilbert, as he gave a tug at the lobe of his right ear. Then he took a turn across the room and back again, for he had been standing by the chimney-piece on Luigi's entry. "After all, then," he remarked to himself, "the boy was in better company than I gave him credit for. Still, he deserves a sound wigging and he shall have it." But his frown had lightened perceptibly, a fact which Luigi's furtively glancing eyes did not fail to note.

"Even granting what you say, sir, that is no excuse for allowing yourself to become inebriated as, by your own admission, you were last evening. Be careful not to let it happen again, or you will find that I shall deal with it much more severely. But I have not done with you yet. I have been very much grieved and annoyed to find that on two or three afternoons a week you have taken to frequenting a certain billiard-saloon in the town, and there consorting with a number of young men whose society can be neither creditable nor beneficial to you in any way. I am willing to believe that, in some measure, you have erred through ignorance, through lack of a clear conception of what is due to your position as my grandson. Still, even that excuse can scarcely avail you in the case of Snell, the groom, whom I discharged a few days ago. That you should steal out of the

house when you were supposed to be abed and go to the fellow's room and there sit smoking and drinking with him, making him thereby your equal for the time being, seems to me nothing less than disgraceful; indeed, I can scarcely trust myself to say what I think of it. After this warning, however, there will be no excuse for you—none whatever, if you do not keep strictly within the lines of conduct laid down for you. Snell has gone; and as regards the billiard-room, I must ask you to give me your word not to enter it again, nor, indeed, any other, without having obtained my sanction beforehand. Are you prepared to give me the promise I ask?"

"Certainly, sir—most fully and willingly. I give you my word to have no more to do with public billiards after to-day, and I shall be very careful about the class of people I mix with in time to come." Nothing came easier to Luigi than to make promises; the difficulty with him, as with so many of us, lay in the keeping of them. "This is another specimen of Lisle's dirty work," he reflected. "He's been playing the double part of spy and informer. But a day of reckoning will come for him."

"Keep to your promise and you will find yourself no loser by it in the long run," resumed Sir Gilbert. "And now you may go for the present," he said after a minute or two. "But I cannot conceal that I am grievously disappointed in you."

Luigi needed no second bidding. He had "pulled through" the scrape far better than he had expected, and was now inclined to be jubilant. "Grievously disappointed in me, is he?" he said with a short laugh. "What did the old fool expect? A grandson made to pattern, I suppose. Well, Granddad will just have to put up with me and make the best of me as I am."

After a few minutes spent in half-bitter, half-sorrowful rumination, Sir Gilbert said aloud: "I'll go and have a talk with Louisa. She's very clear-headed for one of her sex, and her opinions are nearly always worth listening to."

He found Lady Pell in the morning-room, busy with her crewel work and alone. She had sent Ethel for that after-breakfast ramble which she believed to be so conducive to the girl's health and good looks. Sir Gilbert sat down and proceeded to give her an account of his interview with Luigi. "What to do with him, I know not," he ended by saying. "I am sadly afraid that he will never be a credit to the house of Clare. He seems to have contracted a number of low tastes and reprehensible habits before he and I had ever set eyes on each other, and whether I shall ever succeed in eradicating them seems more than doubtful. It is a sad thing to say, but there are times when I feel almost driven to wish that I had remained ignorant of his existence and he of mine."

"My dear Gilbert, you really should not allow such notions to get into your head. Things are not yet come to that pass between you and your grandson. There are many excuses to be made for the

poor young man, and remembering that, you ought to regard his shortcomings with the utmost leniency."

"That is what I try to do, Louisa. It is a bitter reflection, but one which often haunts me, that if I had treated this boy's father less hardly, my old age might have been a very different one from what it is to-day."

"You have translated Lewis to an altogether different kind of life from that which he has been used to, and allowances must be made for the fact. Patience and tact will often effect wonders. I would not be in too great a hurry, if I were you. Old habits and ways can't be got rid of in a hurry. If you believe the young man himself is doing his best to second your efforts, why then——"

"But that is just where I'm in doubt."

"Then give him the benefit of the doubt; it will only be generous on your part to do so. I think, if I were you, I would let him travel awhile. Nothing tends more to expand a person's mind—providing," she drily added, "that one has a mind capable of expansion, and in Lewis's case the converse has yet to be proved."

After luncheon he had a further talk with Lady Pell, one result of which was that he asked Luigi for the address of Captain Verinder, and having obtained it, he proceeded to write to that gentleman, asking him, if it would be convenient for him to do so, to call upon the writer between eleven and twelve o'clock on the day but one following. As has already been stated, Sir Gilbert had conceived a distaste for the Captain at their first interview, and he had afterwards been at the pains to snub him most unmercifully. Had he been questioned as to the cause of his dislike, he could only have replied, that it was one of those unreasoning and unreasonable antipathies which nobody cares to formulate in words, even if it were not next to impossible to do so. In point of fact, it was merely an instance the more of "I do not love thee, Doctor Fell."

Now, however, that he had decided to carry out Lady Pell's suggestion, and send Luigi abroad for a time, it seemed to him that the boy's uncle, provided he were willing to undertake the charge, was the proper person into whose hands to entrust him while away from home. He knew nothing whatever to the Captain's detriment, and he told himself that, as a man of sense, he ought not to allow a foolish prejudice to stand in the way of any project which was likely to prove in the slightest degree beneficial to his grandson. Hence his note to the Captain.

It was not without sundry misgivings and in a far from comfortable frame of mind, that next day Captain Verinder journeyed down to Mapleford. A cab conveyed him from the station to the Chase, where he discharged the vehicle, not knowing whether he might be detained half-an-hour, or half-a-day. In any case, a walk back to the station would do him no harm.

He had evidently been expected, and was at once shown into the

room which was already so familiar to him, where he was presently joined by Sir Gilbert, who, for the first time, welcomed him with an outstretched hand.

Augustus Verinder breathed a deep inward sigh of relief.

It is not needful to describe in detail the interview that followed. Sir Gilbert at once entered frankly into the affair, explaining to the Captain exactly why he had sent for him and the task which he was desirous that the latter should undertake. September was still young, and another month of fine weather might almost be depended upon. It was his wish that his grandson should spend that month in foreign travel, chiefly in Switzerland, with, perhaps, a glance at the Italian lakes *en passant*. Would it fall in with Captain Verinder's arrangements to fill the part of Mentor to this latter-day Telemachus during the tour in question? To which the Captain replied, that nothing would afford him greater happiness; and, indeed, his heart leapt for joy at the thought of being able to spend a month on the Continent without being called upon to disburse a shilling of his own.

Various matters having been discussed and settled, Sir Gilbert produced his cheque-book, and after having filled up and signed one of the forms, handed it to the Captain. A glance at it showed the latter that it represented a sum of one hundred and seventy pounds.

"For your expenses," said Sir Gilbert; "but I have included in it twenty pounds for Lewis's outfit, which, seeing that he will be but a month away, ought, I think, to be sufficient."

"Amply sufficient, Sir Gilbert," assented the Captain as he pocketed the cheque.

"I should like Lewis to drop me a line every four or five days, so as to keep me *au courant* with your movements. I am desirous that you should avoid all large towns, such as Paris and Brussels, either in going or returning. It will be best that you should make your way to Bâle as speedily as possible and decide on your future course after you reach there."

"Your wishes are my commands, Sir Gilbert."

"How soon will it be convenient for you to start?"

"In thirty-six hours from now I shall be at your disposal."

"Trust you old soldiers for knowing the value of time. And now that we have settled everything so far, you must oblige me by staying to luncheon," said Sir Gilbert with a heartiness that was more assumed than real. Do what he would, he could not like this man. And yet he had nothing valid, nothing tangible to urge against him. "I am a prejudiced old fool," he said to himself, "and the older I get the worse I become."

At luncheon the Captain was fortunate enough to give Lady Pell a distinctly favourable impression of himself, which went to prove that Lady Pell's professed ability to read character at first sight was sometimes at fault. "I agree with you that the man is not *quite* a gentleman," she remarked later to Sir Gilbert; "but in that respect

he only resembles the great majority of his sex. In these matters, my dear cousin, one can't pick and choose. It seems to me that Captain Verinder, as the boy's uncle, is the proper person to entrust him to."

Next morning after breakfast, Luigi said to Lady Pell when no one was by: "Can you spare me five minutes in private, Lady Pell?"

"Certainly, my dear boy," was the cordial response. "Come with me to my sitting-room." There was much about Luigi that she did not like, but it seemed to her that in some respects he was deserving of pity.

"And now——?" she said, looking questioningly at him as she took her usual chair by the window and motioned him to another. The room, which had been specially assigned her, had been the late Lady Clare's boudoir.

Luigi cleared his voice and then, a whimsical smile overspreading his features, said: "Lady Pell, last night I saw the Grey Brother."

Lady Pell pricked up her ears and became at once interested. "Gracious me!" she exclaimed. "You do indeed surprise me. When and where did it happen? You must give me all particulars."

"It was late—between eleven and twelve o'clock—I had stolen out of the house by way of the conservatory on purpose to have a smoke." Here Lady Pell shook a monitory finger at him. "The fact is, I've never been used to the early hours of the Chase, and I can't sleep if I go to bed before midnight. Well, having let myself out, I made my way to the little wood, or spinny, which reaches from the back premises of the Chase nearly as far as the old tower where Martin Rigg, the former keeper, and his daughter have their quarters. It was not the first time I had gone there for a smoke after dark. In the middle of it is a tiny glade, or open space, and there I seated myself on the twisted root of a tree. A young moon was half way up the sky, and the stars were very bright. I had smoked one pipe out and thought I would have another before turning in, but on feeling for my tobacco-pouch, which I had laid down beside me, I could not find it. Slipping off my seat, I stooped to search for it among the grass, found it and stood up again. On turning to resume my seat I found myself confronted by a tall robed and cowled figure, which might have sprung out of the ground for anything I could have told to the contrary. Certainly I had heard no faintest sound of footsteps. That I was considerably flabbergasted, your ladyship will readily believe."

"Such an apparition would be enough to flabbergast anybody, as you term it. But what was it like as regards its features?"

"Its face was nearly hidden by its cowl, and all I can call to mind is that it had a long grizzled beard and two eyes that seemed to look through me."

"Well, and what did you do next?"

"I simply bolted—and I'm not ashamed to confess it."

"Oh!" was her ladyship's sole comment, but to herself she said: "You coward!"

"You won't catch me going there again after dark."

"I suppose not after such a startling experience. But tell me this: did the apparition, if such I may term it, project any shadow of itself in the moonlight?"

Luigi opened his eyes. "Upon my word, I don't know, Lady Pell. I was too confused to notice. But why do you ask?"

"Because I believe it is an understood thing that ghosts have no shadows—what, indeed, are they themselves but shadows? You evidently missed an interesting point there. But why have you chosen to make me your confidant, Lewis?"

"Because after what you said to me the other night when that girl made such a bobbery on the terrace, I thought I would ask your advice before saying a word to anybody else."

"That was very sensible on your part. My advice is, that you keep your singular experience strictly to yourself. The whole affair is inexplicable, and no good can come of talking about it. Your grandfather would be greatly annoyed were he to discover that any such report had emanated from you."

Luigi could scarcely credit his good fortune. That he should not merely be done with Latin declensions and those hateful riding-lessons, but be at liberty to ramble about the Continent for the ensuing month, visiting places he had never seen before, seemed almost too delightful to be true. He could not help saying to himself with a chuckle: "Perhaps if I hadn't drunk Miss J.'s health quite so often the other night, this bit of luck would never have happened to me." It was a relief to him on another account to get away from Mapleford for a time. It would effectually separate him from the aforesaid Miss J., who would be sure to hear of his departure. He trusted that by the time he should return she would have forgotten all about that ridiculous question he had put to her on a certain occasion, her answer to which had quite escaped his memory.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

UNCLE AND NEPHEW.

Luigi had telegraphed to his uncle by which train he should travel, and the Captain met him at the terminus. Sir Gilbert's cheque had already been cashed, and uncle and nephew now proceeded to lay in a small but sufficient supply of travelling necessaries. After that they dined at a French restaurant and finished up the evening at a music-hall.

Next day they crossed to Antwerp, from which place Luigi wrote a few lines to Sir Gilbert from a rough draft furnished him by the Captain.

"My dear Grandfather,—We reached here from Harwich early this morning. We are staying over till to-morrow at my wish, there being many objects of interest in this memorable old city which I have long been desirous of seeing. This forenoon we visited the cathedral and two of the more celebrated churches, in each of which we found much to interest us. The afternoon was devoted to the so-called museum, where is a celebrated collection of paintings, including several by Rubens and other well-known masters of the Dutch school. I need scarcely say that we were highly gratified.

"We start by an early train to-morrow for Bâle, which we purpose making our head-quarters. We shall, however, if we find the trains convenient, break our journey for a couple of hours at Cologne in order to visit the Dom, which I feel sure you would not like me to miss seeing."

Within an hour of posting the foregoing letter uncle and nephew were on their way to Brussels, although it was one of the two places specified by Sir Gilbert which he was desirous that his grandson should not visit.

It was not the first time the Captain had been there, and of such an agreeable kind were the recollections he retained of it that he had felt irresistibly tempted to visit it again. The fact was that on the occasion of his previous visit he had left the city richer by twenty-five pounds than he had entered it, that being the amount of his winnings after a couple of nights at the gaming-table. Trifling though such a sum might seem to many people, to the impecunious Captain it represented a very substantial and satisfactory gain. Thus it was scarcely to be wondered at, now he found himself in the neighbourhood and in the possession of ample funds, that a great longing should come over him to tempt fortune in the same way again. He would only risk a small sum, so that if he should prove so unfortunate as to lose it, no great harm would be done, while, if he should be lucky enough to double or treble it, his winnings would help to clear off some of his more pressing liabilities when he should get back to town. It was unfortunate that he was not in a position to prosecute his little adventure alone, but where he went Luigi must of necessity go too—not, as he presently found when he broached the subject, that his nephew needed more than a hint to cause him to exhibit an almost absurd amount of eagerness to follow his worthy relative's example.

Thus it came to pass that about nine o'clock that same evening uncle and nephew, without any further introduction than a few whispered words between the Captain and the man on guard at the door, were at once admitted to the self-styled club or *cercle* (which, in reality, differed scarcely, if at all, from a common gambling haunt), of which the Captain retained such pleasing recollections. It had been agreed that on no account should they risk more than

twenty-five pounds between them, out of which the Captain, as being the more experienced of the two, took fifteen for his share, leaving Luigi the remaining ten.

Soon after midnight the Captain perforce stopped playing for lack of funds. His fifteen pounds had vanished to the last franc; but, on the other hand, singular to relate in view of his inexperience, Luigi rose from the table a winner to the extent of fourteen pounds. Captain Verinder at once decided that next morning should see them *en route* for Bâle.

But it was not to be. While taking an after-breakfast stroll—he had decided not to start till the midday train—the Captain encountered a man who, a few years before, had been one of his most intimate friends. This person, Tyars by name, was now settled in Brussels and in a good position, and nothing would satisfy him but that Verinder and his nephew must dine and spend the evening at his house, an arrangement to which, after a little demur, the Captain agreed.

As it fell out, however, he was compelled to go alone, Luigi, in the course of the afternoon, being seized with one of the violent sick headaches to which he had been subject at times ever since he could remember. His uncle left him prostrate on a couch in a darkened room.

But for once the usually astute and suspicious Captain had been thoroughly hoodwinked. Scarcely had he disappeared before Luigi sat up, chuckling softly to himself. He was bent on a little adventure of his own in which his uncle should have neither part nor parcel. The demon of gambling had got him in his grip, and Luigi lent a willing ear to his enticements. He had won fourteen pounds last night, why should he not win forty, eighty, a hundred to-night? He could see no reason whatever why he should not.

In the big solid-leather portmanteau which held both his uncle's clothes and his own was stored away a little roll of bank-notes of the value of one hundred pounds, the same being part of the proceeds of Sir Gilbert's cheque. Luigi's intention was to abstract a couple or three five-pound notes and with them, in addition to his overnight winnings, to try his luck at the *cercle* for the second time. He had opened the portmanteau and the roll of notes was in his fingers, when he was startled by the sound of voices, one of which he took to be his uncle's, in the corridor outside. In an instant he had shut down the lid of the portmanteau and crammed the notes into his pocket. The alarm proved to be a false one, but Luigi, having taken possession of the whole of the notes, saw no reason why he should put any of them back. After all, they were his property and not his uncle's; besides, although he might take them with him to the *cercle*, he was fully determined not to risk more than the sum he had originally fixed on: it was a determination from which nothing should move him. How his uncle would open his eyes in the morning at beholding his nephew's overnight winnings scattered carelessly on the dressing-table!

Captain Verinder opened his eyes very wide indeed when, on entering his nephew's room some time after midnight, he found Luigi pacing it, wild-eyed, haggard, with clenched hands, tumbled hair and rumpled clothes, like a man half distraught. He had come back from the gaming table penniless. In the excitement of play, all his fine resolutions had vanished like chaff before the wind. He had gone on losing madly, recklessly, till not only had the hundred pounds gone, but his previous night's winnings and whatever else he had had in his purse to boot. Well might the Captain when, bit by bit, the truth had been dragged out, sit down and stare at him in blank dismay. No words at his command could have expressed more than a tithe of what he felt.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A DESPERATE RESOLVE

It was nine o'clock next morning. Captain Verinder, with his hands clasped behind his back and downcast eyes, was pacing the courtyard of the hotel, which was ornamented with a double row of orange-trees and myrtles in green tubs, and had one end roofed with trellis work festooned with a vine, the leaves of which were now turning brown and golden, and under which were ranged a number of rustic seats interspersed with small marble-topped tables. Presently Luigi, for whom his uncle had been waiting, made his appearance, looking very sallow and cadaverous, while the dark half-circles under his eyes bore mute witness to the sort of night he had spent.

"Don't be afraid that I am about to reproach you for your insensate folly," began his uncle. "Your conscience will do that far more effectually than any words of mine. Besides, I hold myself greatly to blame for bringing you here in the first instance, and it is perhaps no more than just that I should have to put up with the consequences equally with yourself. I have been going into cash matters this morning and find that when our hotel bill has been discharged, we shall have about fifteen pounds left, all told. Now, if you can reveal to me by what miracle of economy two people can contrive to spend a month in Switzerland without exceeding that amount, I shall be much obliged to you."

"Of course it can't be done," said Luigi sulkily. "There's nothing for it but to go back home."

"Oh, indeed. And in that case how, pray, shall we excuse ourselves to Sir Gilbert Clare?"

"Why need he know that we have returned? Why can't we lie quietly by in London till the month has come to an end?"

"For a very simple reason," returned the Captain drily. "Have you forgotten that your grandfather looks to receive a letter from you every few days while you are away? Now, supposing you were to

send him a note professedly written from Lausanne, or Geneva, with merely the London postmark on it, what would happen then?"

"I had forgotten all about having to write to the old boy," said Luigi with a smothered imprecation.

"On the other hand," resumed the Captain, "it would be madness to go to him and frankly confess our sins. He would never forgive either of us, and he would regard me, perhaps rightly, as being by far the bigger sinner of the two."

"In that case, what's the best thing to do?"

"Upon my word, I haven't the ghost of an idea. It's a bad look-out all round. Nowhere can I discern a way out of our quandary. But let's to breakfast with what appetite we may. A hungry stomach is never a good counsellor."

It seemed as if the Captain was destined to encounter people whom he knew. As he was crossing the entrance-hall after breakfast he met a man face to face whom he had not seen for some time. He was Mr. Henriques, the money-lender, who, in days gone by, when Verinder was going gaily down hill but had not yet reached the bottom, had more than once helped him to tide over a temporary difficulty. Both the men now came to a halt and each asked the other what had brought him there. The money-lender was not one of those who have no eyes for a man because he happens to have come down in the world; such men have their uses, as no one knew better than he. More than once since his own collapse Verinder had been enabled to introduce "business" to him, and had not been above accepting a commission for doing so.

"Can you spare me ten minutes?" queried the Captain.

"Willingly, if you'll wait till I've breakfasted," replied the other. "I'll join you on the smoking-room balcony in half an hour."

The Captain and Luigi were just in time to catch the mid-day train. They both looked jubilant, and well they might, for Mr. Henriques had come to their rescue. The Captain had introduced Luigi to him and had frankly explained how they came to be "cornered." (He had always found it advisable to deal frankly with Mr. Henriques.) When the money-lender had satisfied himself, which a few leading questions enabled him to do, that Luigi was really the grandson of Sir Gilbert Clare of Withington Chase, he made no difficulty about advancing him a hundred pounds on the joint note of hand of himself and his uncle. For the time being they were saved, and just then they did not permit any thought of the future to mar their content.

It does not come within the scope of our design to accompany them in their wanderings from place to place. It will be enough to say that they made good use of their time and spent their money with a free hand. Indeed, it was owing to the latter circumstances that they found themselves back in London some days before they were due

there, paucity of funds having compelled them to cut short their tour, a fact which they deemed it advisable to keep from the knowledge of Sir Gilbert. Accordingly it was arranged that Luigi should quarter himself for a few days on his uncle, and that the two should then travel down to the Chase as if they had just come straight through from the Continent.

But on reaching the Captain's rooms a very disagreeable surprise awaited them. Mr. Henriques was dead, and the executors on whom devolved the winding up of his affairs wrote, not merely to acquaint Captain Verinder with that melancholy fact, but also to give him notice that the bill at thirty days (the late Mr. H. had declined to have it drawn for a longer period, but had hinted that a renewal might perhaps be arranged) for one hundred and twenty pounds, principal and interest, bearing the joint signatures of himself and Mr. Lewis Clare, would have to be met in due course, and that, under the circumstances, any renewal of it was out of the question.

Never were two men more dumfoundered. They had eaten their cake and enjoyed it, and now the reckoning must be paid. They were no better off than they had been at Brussels; indeed, they were worse off to the extent of twenty pounds, and, now as then, their predicament was such that, of all people in the world, Sir Gilbert was the last whose ears it must be allowed to reach. It was indeed a sorry home-coming.

In the course of the following day Captain Verinder waited upon the executors, but the only concession he could obtain from them was a week's grace beyond the date when the note would fall due.

"London swarms with money-lenders," said Luigi; "surely, one or other of them would do as Henriques did, and advance us enough money on our joint signatures to pay off this confounded bill."

"Very possibly that might be managed; but what then? We should merely be putting off the evil day for a little while, and the worst of it would be that the longer we succeeded in staving it off, the bigger would be the reckoning when it did come. At present all we have to find is a hundred and twenty pounds, but if we should succeed in negotiating another bill, at the end of two or three months we should have a hundred and fifty to meet, and supposing we were compelled to go on renewing, a little later we should have to face a liability of a couple of hundred pounds; and so it would go up by leaps and bounds in the way of compound interest till some day our good friends the usurers would put the screw on, and the inevitable crash would come. No; we must, if possible, find some better way out of our difficulty than that. I'll sleep on it; perhaps an idea may come to me in the course of the night."

Next morning the Captain seemed in a thoughtful mood, and as Luigi was in no humour for talking, breakfast passed almost in silence. When it had come to an end, and the equipage had been removed,

the elder man said: "Draw up that easy chair to the window, and light a weed. I have something to say to you."

As soon as his own meerschaum and Luigi's cigar were well under way, he resumed: "You remember that day about which you spoke to me while we were abroad, when, Mr. Everard Lisle being away on business for your grandfather, the old gentleman called you into his study and got you to write one or two letters for him?"

Luigi nodded.

"Then, you will remember telling me that while you were there a clerk came down from London, bringing with him a parcel of American bonds, for which your grandfather, after having examined and counted them, gave the man a receipt, and that, as soon as the clerk had gone, he asked you to unlock the door of the strong room which opens out of his study, and deposit the bonds in question in a certain drawer marked B. You also said, if I mistake not, that that was the first time you had set foot inside the strong room."

"And the last," interposed Luigi.

"If I recollect rightly, the bonds in question were endorsed 'Missouri and Eastern Union Preference.'"

"That is so."

"That they are a good sound stock may be taken for granted, otherwise your grandfather would not have invested so largely in them. I see by this morning's newspaper that yesterday they were quoted at from 53 to $53\frac{5}{8}$."

"Yes—what then?" demanded Luigi blankly. He could not imagine what his uncle was driving at.

"Merely this, dear boy—that if we could by any means contrive to annex a few of the bonds in question, a way out of our difficulty would at once be opened for us."

The silence that ensued lasted for some minutes. The Captain wanted what he had said to sink into his nephew's mind. It was a daring sugggestion, but, after all, not nearly so audacious as that other suggestion, which had emanated from the same source, that Luigi should personate Sir Gilbert Clare's dead grandson. That suggestion had borne practical fruit, had, in fact, developed into a splendid success. Why should not this one prove equally as successful?

"A very ingenious suggestion indeed, uncle," said Luigi at length; "but how do you propose to carry it into effect? You talk as if I had in my possession a duplicate key of the strong room."

"That is a mere detail," responded the Captain airily, "which I have not yet had time to consider."

"Assuming for the moment that we succeed in obtaining possession of the bonds, and that their loss is discovered, what then?

"Yes, what then? Why should suspicion fall upon you? Should we decide to carry out the affair, it would have to be in such a way as to leave no possible link which would serve to connect you or me with

the missing documents. Besides, I think it not unlikely that some long time would elapse before the bonds would be missed. Your grandfather has apparently bought the stock as a permanent investment, and if such be the case, no reason will exist for him to go through the parcel a second time in order to satisfy himself that none of them have been abstracted. Months, nay years, might elapse without the loss being discovered; it is even possible that Sir Gilbert might die in ignorance thereof. It would be singular, would it not, if the bonds should ultimately come to you as his heir? Looked at from that point of view, you would merely be obtaining an advance on your own property."

"Let us suppose once more," persisted Luigi. "The bonds are sold, let us say; their loss is discovered; as a consequence, a hue-and-cry is set afoot and the missing numbers advertised. In that case what is to prevent their being traced back to the first vendor of them after their—hem! abstraction?"

The Captain smiled as he shook the ash out of his meerschaum. "The answer to that is very simple," he said. "I shall know how to put the bonds on the market through such a channel as will render it an impossibility for them ever to be traced back."

Three days later uncle and nephew, attired in their travelling suits as if fresh from their journey across the Channel, arrived at Withington Chase. Captain Verinder felt it was due to Sir Gilbert that he should personally give him back the young Telemachus who for the past four weeks had been entrusted to his charge.

By this time he and Luigi had settled all the details of their plot, as far as it was possible for them to do so beforehand, and away from the spot.

(*To be continued.*)

SIR DAVID WILKIE, R.A.

JUST one hundred years ago, there was a great commotion on a Sunday evening in the rural parish of Cults, near St. Andrews.

The worthy minister's third son, the offspring of his third penniless wife, was a well-known pointing of the proverb, "Manse bairns are seldom menseful (discreet)," but on this occasion things had gone too far. It was bad enough that David was for ever spoiling the Bible margins with pencil sketches, but when it came to taking a rough portrait of his reverend father preaching, with soft charcoal, on the smooth bald head of a sleeping miller, something had to be done: and the lad got no supper that night, and much reproof.

Short commons was probably not uncommon in the minister's large family. Sixty-eight pounds a year to begin with, and a maximum of a hundred pounds will not go far in such cases, even in Scotland. So David went only to the parish school, and there he was considered but a very poor scholar.

His time was spent, at every available moment, in lying on the grass and copying every person and animal that came his way, or strolling off to the smithy to watch the effects of light and shade. He was a steady affectionate boy, however, although far from attractive in appearance then or ever. The neighbouring gentry began to take an interest, which increased with years, in the awkward, eager student. He was allowed to see the few pictures their houses contained; and later on, after he had spent some time in Edinburgh, taking advantage of some free instructions in art then given to those too poor to pay for teaching, we find these early patrons sitting to him for their portraits, when he returned at nineteen to the Manse, having gained all the advantage he could in the capital.

His master in Edinburgh had as a preliminary refused to admit him as a student, pronouncing his test work utterly worthless. A private letter from Lord Leven was needed as an open sesame.

His early portraits are stiff, crude, and hard, but even then his grouping of any peasants whom he could cajole into models was admirable. When the home patrons failed, he moved on to other parishes; getting a little encouragement here and there, but such very small payments that life was very difficult, and, like Morland, he had on at least one occasion to paint a sign to pay his bill. That sign was soon rescued, and is considered one of his best early specimens. It is a man watering a grey horse.

All this time he was working off and on at a canvas forty-four by twenty-five inches—the 'Pitlessie Fair.' The figures number one hundred and forty, and nearly all the faces are portraits, and the scene is a vivid and living scene from Fifeshire life. This picture

was purchased for the, to David, magnificent sum of twenty-five guineas. The youth was enchanted. Calling in all his small debts, and finding he was now altogether master of sixty pounds, he started for London to study under the Royal Academy, to the great alarm of his father, who predicted starvation and ruin, while David averred stoutly his money would last him for two years. It really lasted nine or ten months, and before it was all gone, his masters and fellow-students recognised there was stuff in this industrious, tall, lanky Scotch youth with his nerveless figure, his pale complexion, his sleek sandy hair, high cheek-bones, snubbish nose, and ill-drawn, retreating chin, his broad accent and rustic air, underneath which lay perdu always the canny prudence of his native land.

He had brought with him some letters of introduction, but they proved of no use except as an occasion for subsequent character pictures. He dined for a shilling a day, cleaned his own shoes, managed to sell a few sketches for small sums; but with all his efforts at economy his money failed. The poor old minister managed, Heaven alone knows how, to let him have ten pounds. He got twenty pounds into debt. With the ten pounds from home came the information that David's sister longed for a piano; could a very cheap one be found in London? It was only to try, and all the humblest music warehouses were searched.

In one the owner of the premises happened to hear the broad accent: his wife was Scotch; and on inquiring the possible customer's name, and learning it was the same as Mrs. Stodart, he was interested, got into talk with the youth, and invited him to tea at his house.

This was the turning-point of Wilkie's fortunes. Mrs. Stodart was delighted with some of the young man's work, and got him a few sitters, and better still, was the means of introducing him to wealthy patrons. Lord Mansfield saw a sketch of the 'Pitlessie Fair,' asked Wilkie to paint him a picture of it, and told him to name his own price. David named fifteen pounds. Before the canvas was covered, he could have sold it vastly better, and was tempted to do so. On consulting his father, however, the minister said a bargain was a bargain, and must be kept. Lord Mansfield gave him thirty pounds. This picture made his fame—that and the 'Village Politicians.'

At twenty-one Wilkie found himself in the forefront of his profession; but the long years of penury, hard work, and deep anxiety had greatly shattered his constitution. His kind friends and patrons did more than order fresh pictures; they induced him to execute them at their own homes; and the boy who only some months back had thought himself lucky to get a sitter for twenty shillings, now found himself an honoured guest in the noblest houses in the land. There was a rugged dignity beneath his rough exterior, and a sensible silence concealed his lack of general education for the most part, while many were unable to distinguish between his raw brogue and the accent of cultured Scotch gentle-folk.

One true and faithful friend did recognise his deficiencies. This was Sir George Beaumont, himself a perfect gentleman. He ever and anon dropped judicious hints, which Wilkie was sensible enough to follow, and for which he thanked the giver gratefully to his dying day. "The more you elevate your mind," said Sir George, "the more you will be likely to succeed." Wilkie sought his advice as to study, and the books he should read, and his letters show the rapid advance and stride of his spirit; 'Don Quixote' was one of the works advised, and used in the artist's idle or flagging moments for years. He worked now industriously at his many orders, and his 'Blind Fiddler' adorned the Academy of 1807. Though it was not, as his friends said, well hung, it proved one of the chief attractions of the season.

At this period the artist was but twenty-two. He was young in years, but old in the experience of his art; nevertheless still eager and anxious to learn and improve, and never ashamed to own if he was ignorant. He did not hesitate to stop a conversation if he could not clearly understand anything that was said.

About this time, having received commissions for forty pictures, he revisited his parents laden with honours and gifts which he had purchased for the good people at Cults. He calls the few weeks spent in the old home at this time the happiest period of his life. His visit over, he returned to better lodgings in town, and to a brighter life of which he kept a minute though rather prosy diary, with the exception of a few touches of which the following is one.

"26th.—A young lady called and made use of the name of one of my friends to see my pictures. She expressed in strong terms her regret at not finding any picture of mine in the exhibition, and said she had seen a print of me but it looked much too youthful. Though she said nothing at all improper, I am inclined to doubt her character as well as her motive for calling on me. It is altogether a strange matter."

There was but little romance in Wilkie's life. He was however once nearly in love, but had not the courage to do more than rapturously admire the fair one's matchless throat and head. He was a man of few words, even then at the height of his fame—of few words and great personal diffidence. His phrase was as follows in a dialogue given as more or less true.

Newton.—Well, we have had a pleasant evening, Wilkie.

Wilkie.—Raily.

N.—But you were very silent.

W.—Raily.

N.—In fact, you spoke but one word.

W.—Raily?

N.—There it goes again! Why, Dawvid, you never do say anything but *raily*—

W.—Raily!

In 1823 Wilkie was appointed Limner to the royal household of Scotland, with a salary of only about one hundred and fifty pounds per year, but then the honour was great and the compliment was graciously conferred.

At this time his father had been dead some twelve years, and during all that period his mother and sister had made their home with him in Philimore Gardens, Kensington, having brought with them from the manse "the old brass pan for making jelly, with an old lay figure and some china, together with the minister's MSS., and David's early drawings." Not long after this great flitting had been accomplished, Wilkie had his first interview, in 1813, with the Prince Regent, who was most gracious and expressed himself highly delighted with the picture, 'Blind Man's Buff,' which the artist had painted for him.

In 1824 Wilkie's tenderly-loved mother died. Two brothers also died that year. David had been security for one of them who had held a good appointment. On his death there was found a considerable deficit which had to be made good by the artist. We find him looking closely again at the shillings and pounds, and on the sale of a picture, making the remark that as nothing had been said about the frame, it was in a plain one, and would do to send it home in.

However a new and the most paying return of his art was then only just opening up—that of selling the right of engraving; and to this business Wilkie gave himself now with all his native shrewdness, and had it not been for the financial crises of 1825, must have done well. A period of great commercial loss set in; Wilkie suffered with the rest, and the fear of renewing his acquaintance with the grim penury of early life was too much for him. His nervous system broke down completely, and it became impossible for him to paint. There was a threatening of paralysis in his hands and feet, and a more serious touch of it to his brain. Having struggled in vain with the cloud upon him, he was at length forced to yield to his physician's advice, and try a complete rest coupled with foreign travel.

The king on hearing this, sent his private physician to the patient. "Go," he said; "Wilkie is proud and shy. He may not need money, or he may. Say to him that on your report, as I feel sure of his speedy recovery, he is to draw on me for any sum he needs, and later on he can repay me with his work."

Wilkie was deeply touched, but he did not need the offered money. He made his Limner salary and a little he had at hand serve his modest needs, and set forth on his travels. For two years he remained incapable of mental or manual application for more than ten or fifteen minutes at a time; his faculties were themselves untouched in essence, and his diary shows a constant improvement of style. He notes in it with great delight that on the death of the King of Bavaria the picture 'The Reading of the Will,' being private property, was sold by auction for twelve hundred pounds, three times what Wilkie had received for it.

Wilkie's art criticisms abroad are most interesting and instructive. He travelled for some time with Washington Irving, and went to a masked ball in his company disguised as a Turk, but made his salaams with his turban tucked under his arm, forgetting it was not an opera hat.

It was Spanish art which seems to have most influenced our artist, and not to his advantage, on his return to work. Once back in England, where William was now king, he had a multitude of portraits to paint as Court artist, and later on he executed his picture of our present Queen's first council at Kensington. Her Majesty was very kind to the artist whom she had personally known long since. Her own taste and talent enabled her the better to appreciate his genius and rejoice at his restoration to health. In 1840 we find him living in a handsome house, with an accumulated fortune of £30,000. He was now fifty-five, and on the eve of starting on a more extended tour than before—one to the Holy Land. He was a deeply religious man, and longed to explore that most interesting region and sketch from Nature designs for some sacred subjects.

"What guide book are you taking?" asked a friend.

"This—the best," he replied, drawing a Bible from his pocket.

He accomplished his tour satisfactorily, but on the return journey took fever, died at Gibraltar in his fifty-sixth year, and was committed to a watery grave in the bay on the 1st of June. A monument is erected to his memory in Westminster Abbey.

ALICE QUARRY.

A GREEK COURTSHIP.

FOUNDED ON FACT.

By F. M. F. Skene.

A GARDEN, glowing with brilliant Eastern flowers and shaded by lofty palm trees, beneath the intense blue sky of Greece, could scarcely fail to do justice to the name by which it was called in the vernacular of the country—Angelo Kepos—The garden of the Angels. Whether it still exists in its pristine beauty, since modern progress has invaded the classic plains of Attica with railroads and tramways, we cannot affirm certainly, but that Paradisaical spot, as it was some years ago, rises before us even now in the soft light of a summer evening.

The heat of the day was over. In Athens, only a few miles distant, it had been overpowering; but here it was tempered by the gentle breeze that blew from the heights of Mount Pentelicus, and the disappearance of the burning sun was the signal for all to come forth and enjoy the cool balmy air of evening.

Into that lovely garden one of the inmates of the dwelling-house to which it belonged had already come with the springing step of light-hearted youth; a white-robed girl unmistakably English, with her red-brown hair and tall slender figure, but who nevertheless was talking in modern Greek with many endearing expressions to the companion by her side. This was a beautiful gazelle, looking up at her with passionate attachment in its great dark eyes, and compelling its small swift feet to keep pace with her steps along the flower-scented paths.

Presently, as was her wont on these cool evenings, she prepared for a game of hide-and-seek with the lovely little deer. Laying her hand for a moment over its eyes, she darted quickly behind a bush, and fled down a shaded path out of its sight.

Then began the charming sport which she knew would follow. The gazelle, panting to rejoin its beloved mistress, rushed with wonderful speed in all directions, every now and then leaping high into the air that he might see over the intervening branches, and detect the white form hiding among the trees. To see the fleet graceful animal thus bounding along in his anxious search was the prettiest sight imaginable; and so a magnificent looking Greek seemed to think, who had opened the garden gate, and now stood within the walls watching the playful scene.

He had a somewhat fierce expression, but was a handsome man, wearing the native costume—a red fez, only half concealing his jet-black hair—a crimson velvet jacket heavily embroidered in gold—the white *fustanella* with its many folds secured round his waist by a

silken scarf, and gaiters of the same colour as his jacket, descending to his shapely feet.

These were pacific days; but the Capitano Gregorios was the representative of a family that had fought fiercely in the Greek War of Independence, while he himself had been only too ready to do battle with the national enemy in any of the islands which were still under Turkish rule; and in accordance with his strongest propensities he was armed to the teeth. Gold-mounted pistols were thrust into the breast of his jacket, a sword clashed at his side, and a dagger was embedded in the silken folds round his waist.

His entrance to the garden had been perceived by the young English lady, and she came forward to receive him, whilst the gazelle, delighted to have found her again, moved softly by her side.

Frances Selby had come to Greece at the age of fifteen, to live with a brother many years older than herself, who was her only near relation. He was a man of classical tastes, rejoicing in the possession of a large fortune, which enabled him to indulge his peculiar fancies, whatever they might be. These had led him some years before to settle in the land of his favourite heroes, and he had married a beautiful Greek, who was a member of one of the noble Phanariote families. Having thus established a home for himself, to which he could welcome his orphan sister, he had brought her away to Greece from the school in London where she had been educated, and for the last seven years she had lived with him and his wife at Angelokepos, without having had the smallest desire to return to England. She had been perfectly happy; she loved Greece, and had learnt to speak the language like a native. She was devoted to the pretty Daphne, her sister-in-law, and to her brother's children, who showed more of their mother's nationality than of their father's, and she would have been well content to remain for life on these classic shores.

There was only one point on which Frances retained her English prejudices—and that was, her determination never to marry a Greek or any one but a true born Briton; if a man answering to that description, with sufficient fascinations, should come in her way.

Now it was precisely to combat this resolution that the Capitano Gregorios had come to her home that evening. He was greatly captivated by Frances; he had also ascertained, with all the shrewdness of an astute Greek, that she possessed the attraction, indispensable in his covetous eyes, of a considerable fortune, and he was absolutely bent on acquiring herself and her English guineas as his own undoubted prize.

After the fashion of his country he had made his overtures to her relations before addressing her personally, and by them his suit had been more or less favourably received—though he was informed that Frances being of age, was quite free from their control and must decide for herself. Mr. Selby told his sister he would be pleased if she settled in his adopted country, and Daphne eagerly descanted to

her on the charming spectacle which would be presented by such a handsome couple as herself and Gregorios when the bridal crowns were held over their heads.

To these remarks, often repeated, Frances always made the same laughing reply: "Gregorios is a savage, and I'll none of him. I would just as soon marry Costaki the brigand."

She little guessed what a strange significance such words were to acquire very speedily.

On this occasion the Capitano Gregorios was bent on conquest. As Frances approached, he gave her the ordinary Greek salutation, laying his hand on his heart, his lips and his forehead, but it was done with an expressive ardour, and the vehement passion that burned in his keen dark eyes told what she had to expect. She knew his declaration must come sooner or later, and it was just as well to have it over; so she made no objection to his walking with her through the garden, and taking a place by her side when she sat down at last under a palm tree. The clashing of his sword startled the gazelle nestling close to her, and she soothed it caressingly while she said somewhat contemptuously to the stately warrior: "Why will you encumber yourself with that great sword? you have no use for it now."

"At this moment, perhaps not," he answered, "though I hold high rank, as you know, in the Greek army; but how many heads of the accursed Turks do you suppose this very sword has shorn off."

She shrugged her shoulders: "Do I know! half a dozen perhaps."

"Monacha?" he said with a scornful laugh, "only six! Bah! it has done better execution than that; a score would be nearer the mark."

"I do not believe you, vain coxcomb that you are," muttered Frances in English, of which he did not understand a word.

"But it is not of Turks or of swords I have to speak now, my beautiful Kuria" (lady), he went on to say vehemently; and therewith he plunged into a poetical declaration of his wild passionate love for her; assuring her that his very life depended on winning her, the bright sun of his existence, to be his adored and adorable wife.

She heard him to the end and then gave him a courteous but most emphatic refusal; his face darkened to an ominous degree: still he could not believe it possible that he, the great hero as he deemed himself, could suffer defeat at the hands of a woman.

"You only say this to try me," he exclaimed; "and you may indulge in your pretty coyness for a little time, if it amuses you, but it will make no difference in the result; what the Capitano Gregorios once resolves upon must be done; Kuria Frangiska, you shall be my wife, and no power in heaven or on earth shall prevent it."

The man's arrogance stung the proud English girl to the quick. She rose to her feet, turned her haughty face towards him and said with a clear ringing tone of defiance in her voice: "Capitano

Gregorios, I know not how you dare use such words to me, but it is the last time you shall have the chance. Understand once for all, that I would rather die than be your wife, and of my own will you shall never enter my presence again."

She turned to leave him, but he caught her wrist in a grip as of iron, while a wild expression of fury distorted his face.

"Have a care," he hissed through his set teeth; "you shall bitterly rue it if you attempt to defy me; when the Capitano Gregorios has a fixed purpose, be it what it may, he knows how to accomplish it. I tell you I mean to have you for my wife, and I will!"

She wrenched her hand out of his grasp at the cost of some physical pain, and calling to her gazelle to follow, without a word more to the infuriated Greek she turned on her heel, walked to the house and shut herself in, locking the door on the inside with a sound which he distinctly heard. The hot Southern temperament made the man look almost like a demon in his rage, but he shook his fist in the direction she had taken, while a deadly oath passed his lips that he would gain her yet, and that speedily.

II.

Frances Selby followed the custom of her adopted country in taking a *siesta* during the hot hours of the afternoon, but the slumber thus obtained enabled her to wake with the dawn and indulge her British love of air and exercise before the sun rose to make movement out of doors almost impossible.

How exquisite that early morning hour is in the fair Hellenic clime it would not be easy to describe. The incense-breathing air sweet with the scent of wild thyme and other aromatic plants is soft and cool as it passes with the tenderest touch over all it meets; the great stars paling in the violet sky give place to the tremulous light that sheds a roseate blush over the East and brings out in strong relief the delicate outline of the distant hills, while the tuneful birds in the olive groves break out into a rapture of song.

All this Frances enjoyed to the uttermost every day during the summer, in a beautiful spot which was her favourite resort.

High up on the slopes of Mount Pentelicus was a little Greek chapel, such as may be found in isolated positions over all the country. Once a year only was any service performed in it, when a priest came for the purpose from some distant village, but it was left solitary and empty at all other times, except when a rarely passing peasant might go in to doff his fez and say a prayer. It commanded however a most lovely view extending even to the Ægean Sea, and there Frances was wont to spend daily a delicious morning hour resting on a broken marble column outside its low arched door.

She was sitting there as usual a few days after her decided rejec-

tion of the Capitano Gregorios, and not a sound had warned her of any danger, when suddenly she found herself blinded by a thick cloth flung over her head and face, and fastened tightly round her throat. At the same moment her arms were seized in a strong grasp and drawn back so that her hands could be tightly tied together. She tried to scream, but her cries were stifled by the heavy folds over her mouth, and she felt herself absolutely powerless when she was lifted up by a pair of vigorous arms and placed on the back of a horse. No sooner was she fixed on the high Turkish saddle than the animal started at a quick trot, led apparently by some man who rode by her side, and it was plain that she was being carried away helplessly, she knew not whither.

Frances felt stunned and terrified for the first few minutes, but soon the courage of the English girl reasserted itself, and she began to consider the situation with what equanimity she could.

She thought that she understood it perfectly—in which conclusion as it happened she was completely mistaken. She knew that the wilder and more uncivilised parts of Greece were infested by brigands, whose favourite pastime was to pounce on any unlucky traveller they could capture, and keep him securely in some of their mountain fastnesses till they could extort the ransom they demanded from his friends at home. She had never feared such a fate befalling herself. Her morning resort was not far from her brother's house; and he was now naturalised, and a man of considerable influence in the country. The brigands, she believed, would think twice before they tampered with his household; and besides, at that time there was a desire among Greeks generally to stand well with the English, which she had always imagined would save herself from any such attack.

However, she concluded she had been deceived, and that the temptation of gaining the high ransom her brother would certainly pay for her restoration, had overcome all other considerations.

It was a very unpleasant catastrophe, but she hoped it only meant a few days of disagreeable captivity—for she felt certain the robbers would not dare to do her any harm, and would simply keep her in rigid durance till the money was sent for her release. She knew very well the process they would go through to obtain it. A missive would be found in the morning on her brother's door-step, written in rude Greek characters, naming the sum, at a very high figure no doubt, which would be required for her ransom, and intimating that the money in the form of gold coins alone, was to be brought to a spot indicated on the mountains, where a messenger from the brigands would be waiting to receive it. Any failure to meet this demand in its fullest details would be followed, they would threaten, by the final disappearance of their captive, whom they would be under the necessity of dismissing to the shades in the realms of abysmal darkness.

That this was no idle menace had been proved a few years before by the sad fate of some well-known travellers, whose cruel assassination

at the hands of Greek brigands brought grief and desolation to many English homes.

Frances was very sure, however, that her brother would not delay an hour in meeting any demand that would restore her to him; so this recollection did not alarm her, and she nerved herself to bear her temporary captivity with courage and patience, little dreaming that she was wholly deceived as to the causes which had led to it.

Hour after hour her horse plodded on with its burden, ever tending upwards over very rough ground. Once or twice the men whose steps she could hear around her, let it rest for a time in the shade, when water and forage were given to it, but she herself was not removed from her constrained position on its back, and she was completely exhausted with fatigue, when at length towards evening she was lifted down—carried a little way further in the arms of the men, and finally placed on what seemed to be a sort of couch.

Then for the first time the cloth that enveloped her head was removed—when her eyes, blinded for so many hours, grew accustomed to the light, she found that she was in the inner portion of a cave on the mountain side, which had been divided into two by a carpet suspended from the rocky roof, so that her apartment was entirely screened from that outside, where she could hear the voices of a number of men. It seemed evident that preparations had been made for her arrival, as the couch on which she sat, though formed of hay, was covered with some rich stuff and provided with cushions; while a low round table at her side had been set out with food and wine. Only one man had remained standing before her, and looking up she recognised him at once as a notorious brigand named Costaki, whom she had formerly seen brought into Athens by soldiers, from whose custody he had very speedily escaped. He met her somewhat indignant gaze with a complacent smile, which was expressive of extreme satisfaction.

"The Kuria can rest now," he said, "no one will disturb her to-night; and here is food—roast lamb, wine, and bread, let her eat and sleep well, she is perfectly safe."

"Send at once to my brother," she said imperiously; "send this very night for the ransom. I know what you want, and you shall have it; only do not keep me here an hour longer than can be helped."

She knew that to exasperate him by reproaches would be very unwise, so she said no more, though she was somewhat surprised at the peculiar expression which passed over his face at her words. He only gave her the graceful Greek salutation, however, and said "Kali nikta" (Good night); then he passed behind the curtain and disappeared.

Frances tried to eat some of the provision left for her as she felt the necessity of keeping up her strength, but she was so completely worn out that she very soon sank down upon her cushions and fell into a deep, restful slumber.

It was broad daylight when she awoke, roused apparently by the

talking and laughing of the band of men in the outer cave. When she once more realised the situation, her heart sank at the prospect of the time which must elapse before she could be released from her unpleasant position. But she rallied her courage, and seeing, to her surprise, as Greek peasants only make their ablutions once a year, that there was an ample supply of fresh water in a huge antique vase by her side, she gladly made use of it, and bound up her long hair as best she could.

Then feeling the air of her apartment hot and oppressive, she went boldly forward, pushed back the carpet at the entrance, and walked into the outer cave.

She found herself in the midst of some twenty or thirty rather ferocious-looking Greeks, who were seated on the ground in a circle smoking their chibouks and talking merrily amongst themselves. On her sudden appearance they all started to their feet, and Costaki, hastily placing himself in front of her, stretched out his arms to bar her passage. "No, Kuria," he said, "you must not attempt to run away."

"Did I say I meant to run away?" she answered contemptuously; "but, if you do not let me breathe some fresh air, I shall die; your tobacco smoke fills that place where I slept; let me go out on to the open ground. You know I can't escape."

Costaki hesitated for a moment, then seeing her determined expression he said with his false smile:

"Come, then, you shall go out; but you must have an escort like a royal lady."

He placed himself at her right hand, beckoned to one of the men to come to her other side, and thus guarded, they allowed her to leave the cave.

Frances looked round anxiously, hoping to ascertain in what part of the country she was, but she could form no idea on that score, for the place was entirely strange to her.

The cavern was situated not far from the summit of a luxuriantly wooded mountain, there was an open space on one side where the brigands' horses were tethered, but on the other was a tremendous precipice which went down without a break for many hundred feet. The scenery was beautiful all around, and the sweet morning air very grateful to the senses, and without asking any leave of her gaolers she went and sat down on a rock under the shade of a huge myrtle tree which grew above it.

Instantly at a sign from Costaki two of the brigands came and placed themselves on the ground at her feet. The others were superintending some cooking operations over a fire they had kindled in the open air, and presently they brought her a cup of steaming coffee and a piece of bread which were to constitute her breakfast. She took it readily enough, and late in the afternoon a second meal was provided for her from the roast lamb, which is the invariable diet of

the Greek peasantry; but the hours passed very heavily, and when the sun had set and she saw herself doomed to another night of captivity, her fortitude almost failed her.

"Did you send for the ransom yesterday," she said angrily to Costaki; "it might perhaps have been here by this time if you had let one of the men go at once to my brother's house."

"Ippomoni, Kuria," was his only answer.

"Patience?" she exclaimed, passionately; "and how long do you expect me to have patience?"

"The Kuria must go to sleep now," he answered; "nothing can be done to-night."

"You will make me desperate," she answered, stamping her foot on the ground. "I do not choose to pass another night in that stifling cave; I want to go home now at once."

The brigand shook his head. "The Kuria cannot go home at present, and if she does not herself go back into the cave we shall have to carry her there."

Frances felt despondingly that she was quite at their mercy, and rather than that they should venture to touch her, she walked unresisting into her prison; at least she was alone and unmolested there, and she flung herself down on the couch. But she did not sleep much that night, and as soon as she heard the men stirring in the morning she went out and took her place once more on her rocky seat with the guard watching over her as before.

"Costaki," she said, anxiously, "tell me when you sent for the ransom; the money from my brother might have been brought already. You had better take care; if you keep me here much longer you will have a regiment of soldiers out after you. The Inglesi are not to be trifled with."

"A regiment of soldiers," he said, with a sardonic smile; "look there, Kuria," and he pointed to the steep narrow track which was the sole means of access to the cave. "Only two soldiers at a time can come up that way, and if any came we should meet them with some pretty little shots which would send them rolling back as dead men. I do not think many of the regiment would care to follow."

She saw that what he said was perfectly true; the cave could be defended with the most perfect ease.

"Tell me what it is you mean to do then," she said, with quivering lips; "of course it is the ransom money you want; why are you making this needless delay?"

"We have a very good reason," he answered, "the Kuria will understand it all this evening."

He went determinedly away to avoid further questioning, and she was left to drag out the weary hours with all sorts of vague surmises as to what was to happen. At length the sunset hour arrived. Frances was leaning back against the rock half asleep when she was roused by a movement of some kind near her. Hastily sitting up,

with startled eyes she saw the brigands who had been guarding her disappearing into the cave, while in front of her stood the Capitano Gregorios, dressed in his handsomest costume, with an insinuating smile on his face.

For the moment she entirely forgot the nature of their last interview, and started to her feet with delight.

"Have you come from my brother?" she exclaimed. "Have you brought the ransom money?"

He laid his hand upon his heart as he answered, "Not so, Kuria—I have come here of my own will entirely, and it is rapture to me to look on your beautiful face once more."

She coloured with anger, but controlled herself so as to answer him gently:

"At least you mean to effect my release, I conclude—you, a gentleman, and my brother's friend."

"I do, and that instantly, but on one condition," he answered.

"What condition can you require?" she said. "You may guarantee any sum you please to those brigands; my brother will pay it."

"The condition has nothing to do with money. I have paid these men already for their services. Kuria Frangiska, you know that I love you; I have sworn that you shall be my wife, and as I have told you before, what the Capitano Gregorios vows will most surely be accomplished. I will release you at once from your captivity, and let you return home for the present, on condition that you go through a marriage ceremony with me in a little mountain church not far from here, where a priest is even now waiting to unite us. Listen," he added quickly as he saw her staring at him with a look of horror, "I do not mean to carry you away with me at once, afterwards—the ceremony may be considered in the light of a betrothal only—one which will bind you to me absolutely and for ever—but when it is over I will take you back to your brother for a little time till arrangements can be made for our public marriage in Athens with all the grandeur and pomp due to so lovely a bride." And he bowed low before her as he spoke.

The whole truth flashed upon Frances in a moment. This was no ordinary capture by brigands—the pitiful villain gazing eagerly into her eyes had arranged it all for his own infamous purpose.

"Then it is you who have organised this horrible outrage," she said, infinite scorn curving her proud lips; "I always thought you were a savage, but it seems you are a murderous brigand as well; no doubt you are simply the captain of this band of thieves and assassins."

"I am not," he said furiously, stung to the quick by her words; "these men know me, and they did what I told them, for I paid them liberally, but I am no brigand; you know very well that I am an officer in the noble Greek army."

"I can no longer believe it," she said. "Would a noble Greek soldier make war on a defenceless girl and lay a cruel trap for her as you have done? But it matters not what you are; I defy you utterly; you

can kill me no doubt if you choose, in this den of robbers, but you can never compel me to be your wife."

"We shall see as to that, my pretty lady," he said, with a fiendish smile. "If you had consented to come with me voluntarily to the church, I would have shown you all homage as to a queen, but if you oblige me to use force, I shall have my will easily enough. I have known how to deal with rebellious slaves before now."

As he spoke his dark face assumed a malignant expression, and he advanced fiercely towards her.

Instantly with one bound she sprang back to the very edge of the terrific precipice which yawned beneath her, and standing so close to the fatal brink as to be really in a position of imminent peril, she stretched out her arm to ward him off, and exclaimed—"If you come one step nearer, I fling myself over and go down to a welcome death which will save me for ever from you."

The man stopped as if struck by a thunderbolt; he was appalled; her flashing eyes, her resolute face left him in no doubt that if he moved she would accomplish her deadly purpose, and he saw that she was already in the greatest danger; an inch more would send her over the edge, her slightest movement might be fatal. Such a catastrophe would be in every way most disastrous for him, and he called out to her in terror.

"For the love of heaven, Kuria, have a care what you do! come away from the edge; the earth may crumble under your feet and you may fall without its being in my power to save you."

"I prefer that danger to the risk of being touched by you," she answered calmly. "I will not stir an inch from this spot unless you can satisfy me that you will not dare so much as to approach me."

"I will not, I will not," he cried; "I swear it by the *Panagia* and all the saints. Only come away from that fatal brink."

"Will you swear it by the cross on the hilt of your sword," she said, not moving a step from her perilous position as she spoke; "if you take an oath on the *Stauros*, I know that you must keep it, and these men will be witnesses of the vow."

The whole force of the brigands had assembled in a group behind Gregorios, and were listening eagerly, intensely interested in the scene, and she knew that he would be hopelessly dishonoured if he broke a vow taken in their presence. It filled the baffled hero with rage to be thus conquered by a girl; but he was in such abject terror of seeing her fall to be dashed to pieces at the foot of the precipice—for which calamity he would have to answer not only to her brother, but to the English Government—that he did not hesitate. He drew his sword from the scabbard, raised it in the air, kissed the cross on its hilt, and swore by that sacred emblem that he would not approach her, that she should pass untouched and unhindered into the cave, where she should be left perfectly alone for the night. He said these words aloud, and the brigands behind him all echoed, "Malesta, malesta" (So shall it be).

But there is little doubt that in his secret soul the Capitano registered another vow that he would yet subdue this proud English girl to his will, and that his temporary defeat should be of very short duration.

As the last syllables of his oath died on the air Frances slowly moved from the dangerous spot on which she stood, and with a quiet stately step passed through the ranks of the brigands as they fell away on either side of her, and entered the inner cave, bestowing not so much as a look on the crest-fallen captain, who stood apart literally gnashing his teeth with impotent rage.

III.

Frances sat down on her couch when the heavy carpet had dropped between her and the tumultuous scene without, and resting her tired head on her clasped hands, she set herself to consider with all her might what she could do to escape from the frightful position in which she was placed.

She felt that all depended now upon herself alone, her brother could not have the smallest idea in what direction to look for her. She had conquered the Capitano Gregorios for that one night, and till the morning she would be alone and safe—but only till then. She knew the man's implacable nature well, and she was perfectly aware that he had in no respect abandoned his indomitable purpose, and he was capable of resorting to terrible expedients for accomplishing his will. After all, she was but a helpless girl in the hands of an unscrupulous villain, backed up by a troop of robbers as cruel and reckless as himself.

While she pondered trembling on these alarming facts, her attention was attracted by the loud voices of the brigands in the outer cave, who seemed to be having a violent altercation with the Capitano Gregorios. She drew nearer to the curtain and listened breathlessly, in the hope that she might at least learn what their future plans were likely to be, with regard to herself. The robbers were vehemently reproaching Gregorios for the task he had imposed on them. He had compelled them to waste their time and energies in watching over this young girl for whom they were not even to have a ransom. There they were, the whole of them remaining inactive in the cave, while they were losing the chance of certain promising expeditions in other parts of the country, of which the arrival of a good many British travellers gave an inviting prospect. Had he not assured them positively that their guard of the young Kuria was to terminate that very evening? Had he not said that he would remove her from their custody at sunset, and there she was hanging on their hands as much as ever.

Then she heard Gregorios' imperious voice demanding silence, while

he assured them that the delay in removing his future bride was only a matter of a few hours. She had but foiled him momentarily by her threat of leaping from the precipice, and they had seen that she was in great danger of a fatal accident. He had been obliged to temporise at that instant, but they could not suppose—he continued with a scornful laugh—that he could be kept from his purpose by a mere obstinate girl! If he had taken a vow to satisfy her for a time, he was ready to swear to them on the Cross that by sunrise next morning he would carry the Kuria off to the church and marry her, let her struggle as she might. After this one night they would be entirely free of their charge, and he could give them the means of enjoying themselves till then. He had some bottles of raki in his saddle-bags—they should have the whole of it for a jovial carouse, while he himself went to acquaint the old priest, who was waiting in the church, that the marriage must be delayed till the morning.

This conversation would have plunged Frances in utter despair, but for the one gleam of hope which she derived from Gregorios' offer of raki to the brigands. Greeks do not readily become intoxicated, but she knew that this was an immensely strong spirit, which would at least have the effect of stupefying them so completely, that they would probably spend the night in a drunken sleep, and if escape were in any way possible for her, it was then she must attempt it.

She continued to listen anxiously, and heard Gregorios received with acclamation by the brigands when he gave them the raki, and then promising anew to be with them at sunrise, he departed.

For more than an hour after that Frances heard the robbers singing and shouting, as they drank the fiery spirit, but at last there were sounds which indicated clearly that it had taken effect upon them, and that they were falling down one by one in a heavy stupor. Gradually even their confused mutterings in slumber ceased, and at length all was still in the outer cave, so that she could even hear the regular breathing of the sleeping men.

Now was her time to make an effort for her freedom.

It was in truth a matter of life or death to her, for assuredly she would not live to be made by brute force the wife of the villain Gregorios. Commending herself to God, she rose and moved the intervening curtain that she might look into the outer cave. Yes! there were the brigands one and all prone on the earth and buried in the most profound slumber.

With trembling limbs and beating heart, she stole in amongst them, stepping lightly over the prostrate bodies as she made her way to the entrance. Once her strength almost failed her when she felt that her foot had touched the head of one who lay just in her path and as he moved she thought he was about to awaken; but he only rolled heavily over on his side, and in another moment she was outside the cave altogether in the free night air with the glorious stars of Greece shining over her head.

Then all her courage returned.

She ran noiselessly to the space where the horses were tethered—they were all bridled though the saddles had been taken off. She loosened the largest and strongest from his place and led him gently away. At once she began the descent of the rocky track which alone led to the cavern, and trembled again lest the sound of the horse's hoofs on the stones should reach the ears of the brigands; but the animal followed her swiftly with her light hand at its head, and soon they had gone a long way down the mountain side and had arrived at comparatively level ground.

Then Frances sprang on his back. She rode too well and fearlessly to be at all troubled by the want of a saddle, and she urged the horse to its utmost speed. Her one idea was to put as great a distance between herself and the brigands as was possible, and when at last after some hours' rapid riding she hoped this was accomplished, she slackened rein and drew a long breath of delight in the sense of freedom and safety. She felt sure there must be many miles between herself and the Capitano Gregorios, and that was a blissful conviction; but then arose the question: where was she? and in what direction must she go to reach her home?

She looked round and saw that she was in a perfectly wild and desolate region with no sign of human habitation anywhere.

The sun had risen and the stars had disappeared which might have guided her to some extent. The horse was contentedly cropping the herbs at its feet, while she reflected, and this reminded her that she had no food for herself, though she began to feel as hungry as a healthy young girl was likely to do under the circumstances; as she had not the remotest idea how to shape her course, she decided to go on in a straight line till she came to some village or peasants' hut which might give her a clue to her position. Riding slowly to spare the horse she went on hour after hour, but she seemed to have got into some desert world from which there was no outlet.

When the heat of the sun began to try the horse she dismounted and sat under a tree, while it made a scanty meal on such herbage as it could find. After it had thus rested for an hour or two she mounted again and went on with apparently as little prospect of arriving in any inhabited place as before.

Then, as the day drew towards evening, she became excessively fatigued. Hungry, thirsty, and exhausted, she bent over the horse's neck as it still plodded on. Her spirits sank within her, and she began to think she should have to die in that wilderness with none to know of her fate.

The sun had set, the horse was stumbling from utter weariness; was there any use in this aimless wandering? had she not better drop off its back and lie down on the ground to perish if no succour came to her? She had been more than thirty hours without food or respite from what seemed a hopeless journey. Brave, high-

spirited girl as she was, it was no marvel that her heart fainted within her.

Still the horse moved slowly onwards, and suddenly among the bushes at a little distance she caught a gleam of something white. Was it possible—could it be—yes, it was a tent! There were human beings at hand, and certainly not brigands, for those unpleasant individuals did not use tents.

She could hardly breathe in the wild joy and hope which sprang up within her. She had no need to guide the horse for its own instinct led it at once in that direction, and soon she was in full view of two small tents pitched in a sheltered spot on the side of a hill.

In front of the largest stood a tall young man, undoubtedly English, talking apparently to a servant of the same nationality, while near them was a Greek whom Frances instantly recognised as the well-known dragoman (interpreter) of the British Embassy, who was often sent with travellers into the interior. It was a most reassuring sight, but Frances perceived it only dimly, for she was half fainting in the revulsion of feeling.

The Englishman turned round at sound of the horse's tread, and uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"A lady on horseback—alone in this wild place!" he exclaimed.

But the dragoman starting forward cried out excitedly: "It is Kuria Selby! She has been lost for days—carried off by the brigands, it was supposed—the whole of Athens has been in grief and consternation about her—the saints be blessed that we have found her!"

"Ah, yes! I heard at the Embassy of her disappearance," and the Englishman advanced quickly towards her.

She could only murmur, "I am half dead—starving"—and almost fell from her horse. He lifted her down at once and carried her in his arms into the tent, where he laid her upon the cushions that had been prepared for his own night's rest.

"Bring some wine quickly, Fenton," he called to his servant; "and food; the poor lady is fainting from exhaustion."

It was instantly brought, and he held the glass to her lips, and then almost fed her like a child with the dainties which the servant handed to him. All three men, in fact, surrounded her with every care and attention till she gradually revived and sat up from among the pillows thanking them all warmly for their kindness.

"Ah, Thanasi," she said to the dragoman, whom she knew, "do you know where my brother is? I did not know which way to go to him."

"He is at the Embassy sending out troop after troop of soldiers to find you, Kuria. He has been in terrible trouble about you. I am sure Mr. Melville will allow me now to go and tell him you are safe, he added, looking towards the Englishman.

"Yes, certainly," said his master; "take your horse at once and

ide off to Mr. Selby. Tell him we will take care of his sister till he an come for her."

The dragoman was gone almost before he had finished speaking, ut Frances looked up timidly, saying—

"I ought to go with him, if only I were not so tired and faint. I m afraid I am a great inconvenience to you here."

"Not the least in the world," said the Englishman, with a bright mile on his handsome face;" this tent is entirely at your service for he night; my servant has another where I can locate myself. I may lmost claim acquaintance with you, Miss Selby, for I brought a letter f introduction to your brother, which I have only not delivered ecause of his distress of mind about you; my name is Hope Melville."

"You have been more than a true ray of hope to me," said rances, smiling: "it is such a blessed relief to find myself here in afety. I have had a most dreadful experience," and she shuddered t the recollection.

"Would it try you too much to tell me your adventures? I own to reat curiosity on the subject, for it created much surprise in Athens hat the brigands did not send to ask a ransom for you."

"Ah, that can be explained," she answered; and she then told im in as few words as possible the history of Gregorios' infamous cheme.

"The scoundrel!" exclaimed Melville. "I hope he will speedily be aught and get his deserts on the scaffold; it is the only fit place or him."

"Do you think I am certainly quite safe from him here?" said rances. "It has been my terror all day long that he might suddenly ppear," and she grew pale at the thought.

"I almost wish he would," said Melville laughing, "that I might ave the satisfaction of putting a bullet through him. But have no ear, Miss Selby; you may go to sleep in perfect security. I shall rap myself in my cloak and lie outside your tent door all night, so hat if the villain came he would have to deal with me before he ould so much as get a sight of you."

Frances protested in vain against this arrangement for his own sake, hough she could not deny the comfort his protection would give her; ut he assured her he should enjoy a night *à la belle étoile;* and eeing that she was quite worn out he rose to take leave, and went ut closing the tent door carefully behind him.

Frances passed a night of delightful repose, and was awoke next orning by the joyful sound of her brother's voice exclaiming: "My arling Francie, thank Heaven you are safe!"

Mr. Selby had brought his servants with his sister's own horse and s English saddle, and it was not long before the whole party were iding merrily towards Athens together. Mr. Melville had gladly ccepted Mr. Selby's invitation to pay them a visit in their own house.

As Frances rode between him and her brother, with the escort of

servants following, the contrast between her position then and her terrible imprisonment at the hands of Gregorios raised her spirits to the highest pitch. Melville noticed that she was laughing softly to herself, and begged her to tell them what thought was amusing her.

"I was only remembering," she answered gleefully, "that I have become a brigand myself—I stole that horse, you know, which your dragoman is leading, and it must remain as my plunder; we cannot give it back to its owners."

"Do not let that trouble your conscience, Francie," said her brother; "you may rest assured that the horse was stolen goods already—possibly some of our friends may recognise the steed of which they have been despoiled, when they come to us in Athens."

Mr. Melville had intended pursuing his travels much further afield, but after a visit of some weeks to the Selbys, he discovered that Greece was a uniquely delightful country, and that the society was above all so charming, he could not possibly tear himself away from it.

So it came to pass that in the early autumn, pretty Daphne had the satisfaction of assisting at a very joyous wedding; although it took place in the drawing-room of the Embassy, and was simply performed by the English chaplain, instead of being enacted with all the beautiful ceremonies of the ancient Greek church. The tears she was disposed to shed when her dear Francie went away to England, as the wife of Hope Melville, were soon dismissed by their promise to return to Athens in the spring.

The Capitano Gregorios was never more seen in all the realm of Greece: he knew well to what he had exposed himself by his outrage on a British subject, and discreetly departed to some region where he had hitherto been unknown.

LETTERS FROM SOUTH AFRICA.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "In the Lotus Land," etc., etc.

Durban. *May*, 1893.

CARE AMICE,—In my last letter I was just able to chronicle the fact that we had at last escaped from our bondage at East ondon, and had safely arrived at Durban.

Nothing could have exceeded our gratitude when the *Dunottar* nally set sail, and the outlines of East London grew fainter by egrees and beautifully less. The sea was still running mountains high -if you will allow a little exaggeration—and decks and cabins were elightfully clear. We had them almost to ourselves. It was not a ng journey: all being well we should reach Durban the next day fore twelve o'clock.

As we did. The scene as the *Dunottar* dropped anchor was very vely. The entrance to the harbour, the low-lying hills and undula- ons, ending in flats that reached down to where the waves broke upon e shore. Bluff Point stretching out to sea, green and luxuriant, on nich the substantial lighthouse—which signals all approaching ssels to the town—looked white and dazzling; a spot in which one ight spend a delightful and solitary month, enjoying the freedom d wide waste of blue and sparkling water, and unbounded expanse sky. Unfortunately we had neither a month nor a week to give to

There is no doubt that Durban, lying at the head of the bay of atal, is the most beautiful harbour, as you look at it from the sea, all the South African Coast. You fall in love with it at once.

Nor does any after-impression or experience disappoint you. We nded, as you have heard, in disaster. All our luggage had gone reering off to the Mauritius, and we had nothing but what we stood in. "Homeless, ragged and tanned," Captain Robinson remarked, th what we thought extreme levity, besides adding insult to injury. nis was after he had been off on his wild-goose-chase in the little nder—not badly named the *Fox*—to reconnoitre the huge and autiful *Conway Castle*. He might just as well have despatched sparrow after an eagle. When he reached the mouth of the rbour she was disappearing on the horizon.

But as you have heard, part of it was rescued, and we were saved ys and weeks of discomfort. It was seen on the deck of the *Con- y*—the most important half, happily—and was sent off again. nt the remainder is in full sail for the Mauritius, or it may be t off at Madagascar, where its contents will adorn the natives. ndry ostrich feathers and fans bought at the Cape will no doubt

be appreciated, the one decorating the head of a copper-coloured chief, and the other cooling the fevered brow of his dusky squaw. This is one of the "incidents of travel" more common than agreeable: but it never happened to us before, and we are not responsible for its happening now.

When we landed we found it intensely hot; but there was a delightful brightness and brilliancy in the air. The loss of our luggage seemed a bad omen, but the dazzling atmosphere forbade any depression; whilst on receipt of the half of it, we veered round and prophesied success to our travels. So is poor human nature swayed by trifles.

The town is a little distance from the harbour, but there were any number of carriages ready to take us up. If our own Metropolis were only half as well supplied with public conveyances, it would be a happy thing for London. Under-paid cabmen have long been a favourite grievance there, but the first reform should be in what the late Chief Justice Bovill called the "ramshackle and uncomfortable vehicles, which were a disgrace to any civilised town." There was nothing of this in Durban, and in quite a distinguished carriage and pair we made for the hotel: Captain Robinson, in spite of his late levity, accompanying us.

We bowled along a broad white road, on which the tramway line made us feel that we were in civilised regions. At the hotel we found excellent rooms in a court gracefully arranged with creepers and shrubs, round which a cool verandah kept the heat of the sun from the interiors: by far the best and most comfortable that we have yet found in South Africa; and I much doubt if we shall again equal it. From all we hear it excels them all: an excellent cuisine, a well appointed dining-room, a staff of good waiters, all dark, and many of them Indians. The landlord himself is anxious and obliging, doing everything he possibly can to make our short stay agreeable. These Indian Coolies were imported because the natives would not work—and excellent servants they make.

But this is what one might expect from Durban. It has the reputation of being the most rising place in the whole Colony, and we can quite believe it. If we might make a far-fetched comparison, we should call it the Paris of South Africa. Everything is new and bright and on a good scale. Here it has a decided advantage over Cape Town. The thoroughfares are broad, wide and straight, something like the Paris we have alluded to, without, of course, houses of twelve and fifteen storeys, a concierge, *ascenseur*, and population of one hundred and fifty palpitating beings. Here, on the contrary, many of the houses are little better than bungalows attached to each other though in most of the thoroughfares no two houses are of the same height and build. It is as though every new inhabitant had arrived and pitched his tent next to the previous arrival, building according to necessity and his ideas of comfort and taste.

DURBAN.

Of course we do not find here Gothic houses and Queen Anne mansions. Simplicity is the rule of design.

The new buildings, however, belonging to important companies or large stores, are really fine, and the public offices are nothing less than imposing. We have indeed heard them called classical, but whether those who used the term referred to the glories of Greece and Rome or the Egyptian antiquities, or merely intended it as a comparative term between to-day and a century ago, was not quite evident. We have not met many to whom we should think the mysteries of cap and frieze, base and outlines, Corinthian columns or classic domes, familiar as household words.

The broad thoroughfares were made for the days when the railway whistle was never heard, and tramways were unknown, and no one dreamed of the rapid strides that the energy and improvements of 1893 would effect. They were made in the days when you travelled slowly, and your heavy waggon was drawn by a patient team of twenty oxen, who refused to be hurried, no matter how the driver might charm with his whip. And turning was a difficult feat requiring care and coaxing and space.

Hence I say the wide roads. And so it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good, and the people of Durban to-day owe something to the clumsy manœuvres of the past.

What a world of progress it is—and what will it be doing a thousand years hence? Paying morning calls to the stars—or returned to an aboriginal condition——having to begin all over again?

I fear, care amice, that is a question we must leave. It cannot affect you and me—a thousand years hence—and it is not worth while speculating upon it. But I always feel that I was born a century too soon—only I should have wished you to be born at the same period. Our Egyptian experiences must all have come to pass: our desert rides and moonlit Tombs of the Caliphs and all the magic charm of our evening converse, when you taught me to distil the true fragrance of the berry—and H. showed us how thoroughly he could appreciate it. You should have been with us, too, at the moonlit Pyramids, with all their untold grandeur and solemn silence, all the loneliness of the mysterious Sphynx, dwelling in such utter solitude age after age, ever looking out towards the wide Unknown and the unseen Beyond, as if watching for the arrival of her lord and wondering why he delayed his coming. For this particular purpose and occasion we will make the Sphynx *feminine*, whatever the design of the ancients: those great founders of the world, whose ideas were in accordance with their country: high and lofty as their skies, broad as their desert plains, stately and far-reaching as their sacred river.

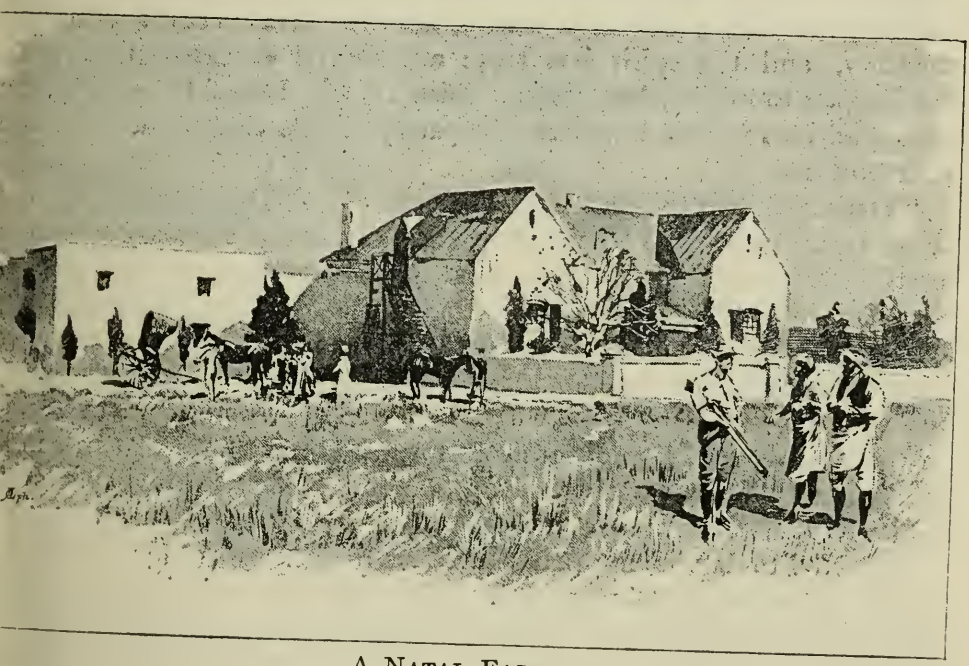
But what has all this to do, you will say, with South Africa?

True it is all part and parcel of the same wide continent, and the horse that takes you out of Durban will land you safely in Cairo, and if horse and rider have superhuman energies there need be no brea

in the journey. But for all that the contrast is so great that it is two worlds: an old world and a new world: and as the comparison would become too invidious if we carried it further, we will compare no more. Honour to whom honour is due, and to each its merits.

So we return to Durban. We might return to many a less pleasant place on this world's surface; we might even go further, and say that in some respects there are few places so charming and so beautiful. But its beauties are the beauties of nature and climate, assisted by the skill and labour of man.

To begin with we found the heat almost tropical, though we are here in full autumn season. Midwinter must be simply delightful without any of those "pale concluding signs which chill the heart."



A Natal Farm.

kies must be ever blue, grass green, and all the lovely vegetation in reat beauty and form. But midsummer is trying, and those who an do so are very glad to escape into high latitudes: the karroo ountry, or an elevated plateau, where, 6000 feet above the sea, you ay enjoy light, health-giving air—and irritating sandstorms. Every edal, you see, has its reverse side; every man his dual nature, all unshine its shadow somewhere, every Pleasure its Pain.

"Alike they are, though in much they differ,
Strong resemblance is 'twixt the twain;
So that sometimes you may question whether
It can be Pleasure you feel or Pain."

To-day the sunshine, the white roads and the new white houses, l made a very dazzling picture, and I long for the old blue glasses we

used to wear in radiant, beautiful, beloved Majorca; in which, we were told by those who wished to be complimentary, that we looked like wise owls.

Durban was full of life and movement. Grass did not grow under the feet of its inhabitants.

En revanche, with the exception of quite the business thoroughfares, houses reposed in their own gardens, and all down a long straight thoroughfare the eye was arrested by a profusion of greenery; graceful trees casting long shadows, flowers, a multitude of tropical plants in pots and tubs, all blending and harmonising with the blue sky.

It was a light and radiant atmosphere—we have already said so: sparkling and exhilarating like champagne, yet in the midday heat inclining to that *dolce far niente* state of existence when life for the moment must be taken as a dream, and realities become dim and shadowy, and the spirit has rest: a state of existence that must not happen too often, lest the paradise of the Lotos Eater, and the enervated nerves and hopeless incapacity of the Southerner, become your portion.

"Dark and true and tender is the north." All the finest characters come from it, with its bracing winds and frosty skies: wholesome moral influences which do good work and raise man to lofty heights he might not otherwise reach. For it is not by constantly fighting against the lower nature man gains the victory: that too often only ends in defeat: but in keeping his thoughts fixed upon the higher, and in trying to cultivate all its possibilities and seeing all its beauties. In a word, in looking upwards, and leaving the things of earth in a measure to look after themselves. He who aims at the sky shoots higher than he who aims at a tree.

But why, to-day, is my pen discursive? And why do I presume to talk to you of moral victory or defeat, and point the way? You, who have laid bare to me your inmost heart, with all its great endeavours and high aspirations, and lofty ideals realised? You whom I place above most men I ever met, and whose nature—intellectual and moral—reaches nearer perfection than any I had ever known before?

And yet—we have agreed that it is well and wise, it is better, in our letters, to tell out all our thoughts, so that no *arrière pensée* shall come between, and raise up those fine impalpable barriers which have been, and are, so constantly destructive to true friendship. That friendship, without which the world would be a blank and life a void, and some of our most ennobling qualities would die for want of sustenance. There comes a time in every man's life—unless his monument be a broken pillar—when as Wordsworth says:—

> ". . . Nothing can bring back the hour
> Of splendour in the grass, or glory to the flower:"

r as Byron less chastely but more passionately exclaims :

"There's not a joy the world can give like that it takes away,
When the glow of early thought declines in feeling's dull decay . . ."

But friendship is eternal, and outlives youth and age and time and mance, the chilling influence of the world with its winter blight and asts of constant disappointment and shattered idols. "We receive it what we give" has been said, but with rare exceptions, our perience tell us that we give infinitely more than we receive. Those ceptions are our Friendships: and so, as Shakespeare says, that nderful dissector of the human heart, who seems more true to an than man to himself :

"The friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hooks of steel."

Though Durban was full of life and activity, a certain atmosphere progress and success, there was no undue noise and bustle and mmotion anywhere visible. People seemed very much in earnest, t there was also a "due deliberation" about them, entirely free from e breathless condition of things and people generally found in large siness towns.

Down the principal streets went tramways to and fro, but in se wide thoroughfares they in no way interfere with other traffic. d indeed this may have something to do with the leisurely look the walkers: in these broad thoroughfares they need not tread n each other's heels and jostle each other's elbows, as they do the business streets of our own "London town."

Much calmer and quieter they looked even than Cape Town, but every way Durban has the advantage in point of situation and ect. We might almost call it Cape Town in holiday attire. The ets of the latter are a mixture of new and old, some wide, many row, straggling and ill-paved; whilst the general aspect of the iness portion is that it has grown shabby and would be all better for repainting.

n spite, too, of the grandeur and splendour of Table Mountain, town is a little oppressed by this huge wall of rock, from which e is no escape.

t is one thing to ascend it, and gaze out upon the wide ocean, utiful here as at Durban; one thing to go round it in that derful Victoria Drive, and mark the outlines of the Lion Rock, take the number of the Twelve Apostles, giving to each its name, he fancy pleases you; one thing to gaze upon the luxuriant hill- s with their purple heather and silver trees—pictures that enchant eye by their colouring; to gaze upon the rich vineyards of Con- tia, which send forth their cordial to revive the drooping spirits, bring back to the heart its life-blood; but it is quite another g to dwell under the very shadow of this immense mass of

impenetrable rock. The eye grows weary of tracing its outline against the blue; and the oppression increases until you feel that nothing will relieve it but a vigorous climb and a long, far look-out on the other side.

So at least it strikes a stranger. It may be that the inhabitants of Cape Town, born and bred under its influence feel none of these "wild pulsations," which come with such a sense of pain to those who long to reach the mountain top and breathe its glorious oxygen. Certainly those we met appeared to trouble themselves very little about the mountain, or even to seem aware of its existence. Their whole thoughts were centred upon the prosier matters of business and the very real and important considerations of getting on in life, and waxing rich, and making hay whilst the sun shone: the race for wealth common to all the world.

In Durban they took things more leisurely, and it was much more agreeable.

Everything about its situation was beautiful and refined; the wide bye-thoroughfares we have referred to delighted the eye with their rich arrangements of trees and flowers; houses standing back full of repose and the "dignified leisure of life." There was no Table Mountain to cast its shadow and oppression. Look which way you will, the eye rests upon a broad open expanse, a marvellous blue sky.

Durban stands fairly high above the sea, so that enervating as it may be in the tropical heat of summer, you are open to all the winds that blow. Outlines there were, but they were wide and glowing. From a height you gazed down upon the harbour which from this distance looked charming and dreamlike; full of repose and the picturesque element that ever accompanies ships and their beautiful forms, and all the brightness of colouring which is never absent from any scene where the flags of all nations are flying. It was a perfect and enchanting picture to trace the outline of the harbour—that wonderful natural harbour, with its low, green sloping banks, ending in the Bluff with its lighthouse boldly confronting the sea.

And beyond all, the marvellous ocean, its waters blue and green and clear as crystal, flashing, dazzling in the full sunshine. The land looked like an emerald in a wonderful sapphire setting. The clear, rarefied atmosphere rendered everything distinct, everything near; commonplace objects would have looked beautiful—how much more all these wonders of creation. Their charms can never be sufficiently studied, their influence upon heart and soul never exaggerated. "If I want to *serve* God," said a great man, I go into the town; but if I want to *feel* Him I go into the country." It affects the intellect no less; a little solitude and meditation amongst these high and ennobling scenes restores the balance of an overstrained mind and overtaxed nerves, which distort our views of life, so that we cannot rightly judge of anything, losing sight of the

ST. JOHN'S RIVER: WITHIN THE GATES.

good around us, exaggerating the ill. Above all they give us dark and gloomy views of our fellow-man, and we grow distrustful and suspicious, and every sign and signal is misinterpreted.

But to dwell for a time amidst the beauties of nature makes a man whole once more, and he sees "good in everything:" brooks sing for him their healing song, trees whisper their message, the blue sky bids him look upwards hopefully, and the winds of heaven fill his whole being with rapture.

> "One impulse from a vernal wood
> Will teach you more of man,
> Of moral evil and of good,
> Than all the sages can."

Nothing is more true.

We found the hotel fairly crowded, to which many passengers from the *Dunottar* had added their number. Some of these guests were noisy, others combined with noise what may be politely called an "energetic hilarity," to which distance lent its charm. Good comradeship no doubt exists in South Africa; and "board-ship friendships" are carried on indefinitely by those who have discovered that they are kindred spirits: so that they join common cause and interests, and explore the country together. There is an irrepressible hail-fellow-well-met element about them not exactly in keeping with the manners of a courtier; but they enjoy themselves in their own way—and one cannot interfere with the liberty of the subject.

Our obliging host gave us a quiet table to ourselves, admirably appointed with snow-white linen and spotless silver. A profusion of tropical plants and evergreens refined and beautified the scene.

Unnecessarily large for two, and the hotel crowded, we arranged that a Dutch lady and fellow-passenger should join us. The whole room was admirably arranged, and the dinner was excellent. The dark waiters dressed in Indian costumes, many of them with white turbans, looked imposing; spotless as the table cloths, as if they too had all just been washed and mangled.

Our own waiter was a young lad of about twelve, but one of the sharpest and quickest in the room. He informed us that he was Indian and that his father and mother lived a little way up the country. His dark eyes flashed with pleasure whenever we complimented him upon his *savoir-faire*. The way he stood at the proper distance from us, a perfect attitude when not serving, would have become the foremost of English butlers. Every wish was anticipated. He was full of intelligence and spoke excellent English. H. asked him if he would come over to Europe and be his tiger and general factotum and the little fellow with a wistful look replied: "He couldn't go so far away from father and mother." But his admiration for H. was evidently unbounded, and he seemed half inclined to take the matter into earnest consideration: which would have placed H. in a serious

CUTTING THE SUGAR CANE, NEAR DURBAN.

predicament. I should have had to take the tiger off his hands until such time as he was ready for him.

Our Dutch lady-companion was much amused with his grown-up airs and bearing and *aplomb*. He was certain of himself, and every now and then gave a look at H. which very plainly said: "You see that if I did become your tiger I should be equal to anything."

The Dutch lady, Baroness Van Tromp, fortunately for us spoke excellent English and French: for much as we admire Holland, we have "no Dutch" at our command. At the Cape she must have felt very much at home, for there you hear the language spoken, and many things remind you that the Dutch settled here many generations ago. But in Durban the element is conspicuous by its absence.

"I am a descendant of the great admiral who placed a besom at the mast-head and said he would sweep the English from the seas," she remarked: "or rather, my husband was," she corrected.

"But Van Tromp found his boast a very idle one," said H., "and he had to haul down his besom."

"Yes," Madame Van Tromp quaintly replied. "He found that for every single besom of his, the English could produce two besoms: and so the poor man got the worst of it. He had reckoned without his host; and yet I don't think that pride and vain-glory and boasting can be very much laid to the charge of the Dutch."

"Not to-day, perhaps," said H. "But in those days the Dutch were a great people. They had had great successes, and it was natural they should think themselves equal to anything."

"So that success is evidently a dangerous thing. A little pride puffeth up. *La fable du bœuf et de la grenouille* over and over again. It is easier to gain our laurels than to wear them becomingly."

"Because even great minds do not always rise to the occasion," returned H. "And then accident has often something to do with a man's success: a fortuitous concord of circumstances, or more vulgarly speaking, *luck; la main heureuse*, as the French say in their games of chance; this often gains the laurels; but accident will never give him the tact and grace to wear them. These must come from the man himself and prove the metal he is made of."

"Not always gold, I fear," laughed Baroness Van Tromp. "It is so difficult for a man to know himself, and correct his weaknesses: and so they remain to prove the imperfection of human nature. Have you not a poet who says something of this sort—about people seeing themselves just as they are?"

> "'Oh wad some power the giftie gie us,
> To see ourselves as others see us,
> It wad frae mony a blunder free us,
> And foolish notion—'"

quoted H. "It is Burns who says that. I fancy he knew about as

much of the human heart as most poets, Shakespeare excepted. Like Sirius amongst the stars, *he* cannot be classified."

"*Hors ligne*, as the French say. Well, Burns may have been a great connoisseur of the human heart," added Baroness Van Tromp, drily, "but I do wish he had not expressed his ideas in that impossible Scotch language, which only a Scotchman can understand. It may be very fine, but to me it seems very clumsy—what you call homely; and whenever I read him I cannot get the feeling out of my brain: 'This is the plough-boy poet.' Oh, I know what you would say," she cried, as H. was about to make a remark: "his genius—and all that. I am quite willing to admit it; but I wish it had been differently expressed. If I were a Scotchman, no doubt I should reverence him; but being only Dutch, he is unintelligible."

We had reached the "ice pudding" stage in the menu, and both Madame Van Tromp and H. made comical grimaces at each other as they found it more degrees below freezing-point than they had anticipated. "At least this is not *Burns*, laughed our lady friend, "if a *jeu-de-mot* may be allowed in South Africa: though, like the poet, the quality is extremely good."

"*And not unintelligible*," added H.

"And yet both homely and poetical," she laughed again. "Ice pudding is the poetry of food. But if we go on we shall get foolish, or mixed, or out of our depth. How delightful that you should have procured this table for us, *tout à fait à part*."

Later in the evening, when the shades were falling, refining and poetising everything, we wandered down to the harbour and the shore. Everything was still and calm and beautiful. The shipping was all at rest—that wonderful tranquillity that always distinguishes a sleeping harbour. Not a sound from any vessel; nor the barking of a dog nor the straining of a rope. The flags were all down, and by so much the bright effect of colouring was removed. The good-tempered looking Zulus had done work for the day, and disappeared. One missed their presence, for they are full of life and movement; and I hope we may see the day when they will become Christianised and civilised members of the world. They appear equal to it, and worthy of having time, thought and trouble given to them.

Further down on the flat reaches of the shore, looking out oceanwards, they have built an hotel and small colony of houses: and many persons might prefer this situation to any other. To the right stretches Bluff Point with its lighthouse. Above, there is the vast expanse of sky, and below, the vast extent of sea. The water for ever plashes and murmurs upon the shore, the tide for ever ebbs and flows; and in stormy weather, the waves in this bay of Natal sweep in with a voice of thunder, breaking and dashing themselves in vain fury against the immovable rocks of the Point, their spray reaching up to and surrounding the very lighthouse itself.

To-night everything was in repose; the waters were calm and

placid. Out in the bay, the *Dunottar* was riding majestically at anchor : a thing of beauty, but not a joy for ever. Many a miserable hour have hundreds of her passengers passed in their cabins whilst she toiled manfully against wind and weather.

There was no suspicion of anything of this sort to-night. Like the harbour, she was an emblem of repose. And as the shades grew deeper, and her outlines more shadowy and unreal, and all her lights appeared, she looked like some mysterious thing of life and power and enchantment. The sun had set in majesty and glory. Cloud flakes of gorgeous gold and crimson floated upon the wonderful opal sky beyond, deepening above into the richer blue. A star hung trembling and liquid in the west The sea became a painted ocean, warm and flushed and full of unfathomable reflections. Then all gradually faded ; darkness fell and shut out the scene ; and in the deep dark blue stars and constellations began their solemn march, large and brilliant as they ever are in this rarefied atmosphere ; the solemn mysterious stars ; those countless worlds of which we know nothing, travelling for ever and for ever in the eternal silence of space.

The next morning we devoted an hour to replacing all the necessary *articles de voyage*, which the missing portmanteau careering on its wild way to the Mauritius rendered imperative. Unfortunately all our photographic plates and rollers have gone, and these we cannot replace. All the thousand reminiscences of travel that we had intended to store up for the future can never be taken. This is really a loss and a grief to us, and we look upon it as a misfortune. Everything else can be had under one roof ; for they go in very largely for the "store" system out here. All places large or small are called stores ; the word "shop" is beneath them, and does not exist : a fine distinction, of which they no doubt see the point.

At any rate we found our store very useful, and the people very obliging.

Amongst other things they persuaded us to buy hats "for the sun," assuring us that in travelling we should run the risk of sun-stroke without them. H. went in for a large straw, which they trimmed up very elegantly, as the Americans would say, and I became enamoured of an enormous felt, which sent H. into irreverent convulsions, whilst he declared that I looked what Mrs. Malaprop would have called the very moral of a Greek brigand. In fact, for ever after, though you would think vanity ought to be extinct at my mature age, I shall only be persuaded to put it on when the temperature is 110° in the shade. In vain he now declares it "becoming"—the mischief is done.

Our purchases over, we next proceeded to explore what really is the great charm and beauty of Durban—the Berea.

This encircles the town, and round it a tramway travels. It lies higher than the town, and all the well-to-do people of Durban live here. To us it seems one of the loveliest spots in the world : a

A Dutch House of the Early Settlers, Cape Colony.

small earthly paradise. Here life ought to pass in an enchanted dream. The houses all look large and excellent, and built with a certain amount of taste and style. Every one of them stands far back from the road, and higher than the road, each in its own beautiful and extensive gardens.

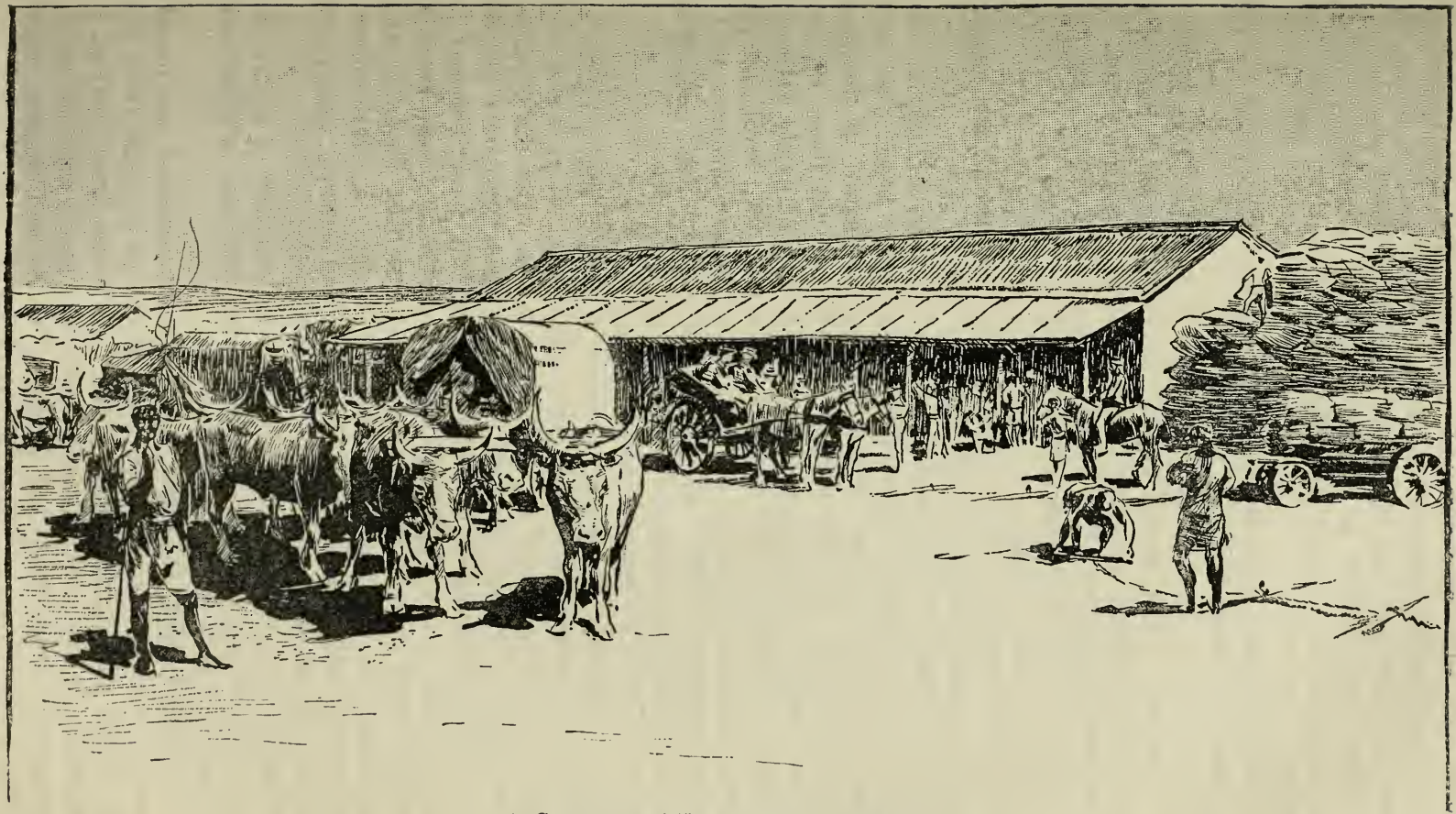
And it is these grounds that form the chief delight. Each individual owner seems determined that his own property shall exceed in care and beauty that of his neighbour. Everything consequently is in perfect order. Beautiful trees grow without too much system and regularity; palms and other tropical vegetation abound; gorgeous flowers filled the air with scent and colour; pampas grass, with its graceful feathers, bends to the slightest breeze; rich undulating lawns of greenest turf delight and refresh the eye.

We could never tire of gazing upon this paradise where nothing is too stiff and formal; and wonder whether the people whose lives are cast in these pleasant places, appreciate their privilege.

And the charm continues, for the Berea seems never ending. Many of the houses, surrounded by cool verandahs, stand so high on their own slopes, that they have an extensive view of the lovely ocean beyond the town, the outlines of the coast, and all the shipping that may pass. Rarely have we seen a spot in which we think we could dwell with so much happiness and content. Above all is the matchless blue sky; surrounding all, glorifying all, the clear, sparkling air, alone worth a king's ransom; to breathe which almost seems to make life worth living.

Possessing the Berea, Durban may fairly lay claim to a beauty and charm not to be found we are persuaded elsewhere in South Africa. One of its merits is that whilst distinctly apart from the influence of the town, it is not too far away, so that the inhabitants have only to spend a little time in going to and fro to their daily business. This morning the temperature was intense, almost tropical; the dusty road seemed at a white heat, and the grateful shadows cast by the roadside trees were black and sharply outlined. The houses looked the perfection of coolness, repose and dignity. A month spent here would pass as a vision, and it is one of the few places in South Africa that as yet have inspired us with a longing for a more intimate acquaintance. The drawback is that a month of this dream-like existence would only leave us with poor Oliver's desire "for more:" though it is always wise to give up everything before familiarity begins to disillusion. And wherever the senses are strongly stirred disillusion must come; it is inevitable; the law of cause and effect; compensation. Everything is seen through a glamour, which never lasts. The calm and serene, the unemotional, this gives place to the wild exalted mood, and expecting less, lasts the longer. The fiercer the storm, the sooner it is over.

The very word Natal has a pleasant sound, when we know why it



A Station, "Up-Country," Natal.

is so called, and cast back our memories into the far-off past; those middle ages, when men were bold and strong and earnest, and everything was beautiful, and the ancient towns of the world, under feudal dominion, raised up monuments to their glory, which one would like to think imperishable as time itself. But, alas, this latter hope and thought—like much else that is beautiful—is nothing but a dream.

Natal then was so called because it was first discovered by Vasco de Gama on Christmas Day 1497.

That was a voyage full of results, for it was then that India was first reached by way of the Cape. Vasco de Gama called his new land Terra Natalis, and two hundred years later, the Dutch, who were then established at the Cape, hearing of this wonderful land through some shipwrecked sailors, presently purchased the Port of Natal from a native chief.

They did little more, and Natal was scarcely heard or thought of until the present century—about the year 1820.

Then a party of sportsmen, elephant-hunting, trading in ivory, seem to have become impressed with the beauty and richness of the country, reported thereon, and awakened the enterprise of the people of Cape Colony. It was a land of Goshen, said these explorers, and the mouths of the Cape Colony settlers immediately watered for the grapes of Eshcol. Not contented with their own lovely vineyards growing under the shadow of Table Mountain—Constantia with its rare wine-cellars, in which an army might conceal itself—Natal also grew into a Naboth's vineyard for them.

They obtained it, however, by fair means.

Chaka was the chief, and from him they bought rights and privileges: a concession of the coast, and a tract of rich and fertile country stretching inland for a hundred miles. But the population was a savage tribe, and some of the enterprising explorers lost their lives. This is always the shadow that lies upon our colonies and great possessions—in acquiring them brave men have been sacrificed. Amongst those under consideration was Lieutenant Farewell, whose name seems to have been ominous of his fate: a naval officer of great bravery and good sense. Treachery and betrayal, however, are hard weapons to fight against, and by them he lost his life.

It was in 1823 that he first sailed into the harbour of what is now Durban, in the brig *Salisbury*, with about twenty spirits as adventurous as himself.

Chaka was King of the Zulus, and has been described as a monster of cruelty, but he was no worse than others of his kind who have lived before and since. He received the brave little band at his military kraal with due civility, and made them grants and concessions. Presents were exchanged, and glittering beads and flashing copper ministered to his vanity. Not his the creed of "beauty unadorned." On that occasion he was surrounded by 12,000 warriors, who with

shields and assegais, war-paint, feathers, and flashing eyes, must have presented a formidable appearance.

Courageous must have been our little band of explorers, for they were venturing into a lion's den. Twenty-five thousand men and women took part in a war dance, and endless cattle passed in review before them. Chaka boasted of his wealth and power, declaring himself the greatest of living monarchs, governing a people countless as the stars. Of the English he professed great contempt, ridiculing the idea of turning hides into shoes, when they were far more useful and ornamental as shields.

Everything, however, at their first visit went well.

They received grants of land, and Farewell established his camp where now flourish the Town Gardens of Durban—graceful memorial to so brave a man—though the Gardens were not placed here with that intention. Lieutenant King, one of his brave comrades, took the Bluff, that portion which we first see on dropping anchor in the waters of the bay; and later on, the Bluff was to become his grave.

In this small territory of the Bluff they discovered a few half-starved, terror-bound natives of the *Amatuli* tribe, who were not distinguished for refinement of life or elegance of dress. These had taken refuge here after Chaka's invasion, and as they were not particularly in his way, he magnanimously spared their lives. They lived luxuriously on roots and shell-fish, and here remained for years, unmolested, never showing themselves, never seeing a vessel or a strange face. A shipwrecked sailor, a white man, was once cast adrift amongst them, and they put him to death as an unknown species of sea monster with dangerous tendencies.

At first they looked with suspicion upon our small band of explorers, but kindness presently gave them confidence, and the wild men grew tamer.

This little Colony soon became a City of Refuge, to which all the natives found their way when under the displeasure of Chaka the despotic. He, indeed, was a monster in many ways, and one of his greatest enjoyments was to put a few hundred of his followers, men and women, to death, for the pleasure of seeing their life-blood flow past him in a red stream. The wonder is that he allowed our explorers to settle in the country, even granting them a territory, and permitting his followers to escape to the English settlement when their life was in jeopardy.

But so it was: and the land was well named Natal, which was only another word for Christmas, meaning Peace on Earth, Good-will towards men.

In a few years this haven of refuge had a large following, and no doubt many a savage nature was tamed and civilised and Christianised by the explorers, who were true missionaries in everything but name.

For a time the settlers enjoyed peace and quietness; the country

was a rich land of promise; there was every possibility of trading in ivory and other things; Chaka was disposed to be friendly.

Then the English settlers managed to build a small schooner, which was to trade between Natal and Port Elizabeth. They named it the *Chaka*, after the Zulu King, and in feathers and war-paint and with an army of followers, he condescended to speed them on their way. He was anxious to stand well with England, and to enter into a friendly alliance. Evidently this monster of cruelty was both intelligent and capable of better things. His savage nature and surroundings, his want of opportunities—much was due to these influences. They only act according to their light, these savages. *Savoir tout, c'est tout pardonner.* What a blessing it will be—what a long-drawn breath of relief—when the last savage has disappeared, and civilisation shall cover the earth as the waters cover the seas. Will that time ever come? Not unless the world is still in its infancy—but many of those best able to judge think we have entered upon the perilous times of the last days. They are certainly perilous enough.

All went well for a time with our explorers. Chaka, we have seen, in war-paint and feathers, wished their little bark prosperity—which she was never to have. As is so often the case, a man's foes are they of his own household, and civilisation retarded her own progress. At the Cape they would none of the King of the Zulus. No alliance should be formed with him. It was a mistaken policy, which threw back the prosperity of Natal many years.

The poor schooner *Chaka*, every nail of which had been driven in with hope and trust, was confiscated at Port Elizabeth, where she went to rack and ruin, and the brave and enterprising band of explorers and traders were sent back to Natal in a war sloop.

Lieutenant King fell ill of disappointment and vexation, and died a martyr to his cause at the Bluff, where he lies buried.

Chaka was offended. The Cape government sent him presents by way of conciliation, but this only made matters worse, for he did not think them good enough. Cattle and feathers, war-paint and beads were all below the mark. Probably he would have put an end to the settlers and taken back their land, for revenge is the first law of the savage; but he was himself murdered by his brothers, who, seeing that he was growing in cruelty and shedding more and more blood, feared their own turn might come if they were not beforehand with him.

One day Chaka took upon himself the office of a "dream doctor," and athirst for blood, put 400 women to death. Shortly after this, whilst choosing some favourite feathers for decoration, the brothers came up behind him and stabbed him in the back. In his death agony he is said to have seen a vision, declaring that he beheld white men afar off who would one day possess the land and be its masters: and his death would be avenged.

So it came to pass; and to-day the fair country of Natal rejoices

in the rule of the "white men." The seed sown by that little band early in the century has borne fruit. The richness of the soil rivals the beauty of the land; therefore it must be rich indeed, for Durban is an earthly paradise. It would be too much to say that its inhabitants are angels, but surrounded by such lovely influences they ought to be in that happy condition of life, when the golden hours run out in constant harmony, "and all is piety and all is peace."

SONG.

All in the golden morning
  Ere dust had dimmed the day,
She came across the meadow—
She trod the dewy shadow
  Singing all the way.
'Oh, I am blest beyond the rest,
  And the world is sweet with May,
And the sky is blue, and my love is true,
  For all he is far away!"

All in the silver morning
  Ere feet had tracked the snow,
She trod the bare wide meadow
Beside the brown wood's shadow,
  Sighing soft and low—
"Oh, I am curst beyond the worst,
  For the flowers forget to grow,
And the skies are grey and the one away
  Forgot me long ago!"

All in the April morning
  When gold and silver chime,
She laughed across the meadow,
Through the green wood's dappled shadow,
  With feet that danced in rhyme—
"Oh, best and worst, and last and first,
  The old earth is in her prime,
For the sky is clear, and my love is here,
  And he loved me all the time!"

E. Nesbit.

AT THE SEIGNEURIE: A CANADIAN STORY.

By Ada M. Trotter.

I.

NÉONIE McFEE, a Scotch maid, transplanted for the nonce to the backwoods of Canada, took stock of her surroundings and bravely determined to make the best of them.

First of all came Madame; an intense objective point in full focus, this great-grandmother, whose strong arm had stretched across the wide Atlantic and wrestled for one year's possession of her namesake Néonie. Madame, descended from the old French *noblesse*, was Marquise in her own right, did she choose to claim the title; and proud of her race as of her rank, exacted all ceremonious observance from the members of her household. To Néonie, fresh from the heart of a sincere loving home-circle, these small courtesies were exasperating in the extreme. She felt as though her heart were gradually ossifying under incessant training in courtly etiquette; "stage effects" she called them in her letters home.

Madame was a mystery no search-light (turned on by so innocent a soul as Néonie's) could solve. Why had she sent for her? What did the fire in those glowing eyes mean? Love? Hate? *What* does she want with me? asked Néonie, as the dull days dragged wearily onwards; and she looked vainly afield for entertainment.

The old Seigneurie, a reminiscence of the De Leroux Château in Normandy, was a large rambling building, protected by a moat, and by a block house from incursions of the Indians. The moat was now a mere covert of bramble; the block house a ruin; yet the mansion, kept in repair by successive generations, held its own against wind and weather. But Néonie as she wandered restlessly about the dreary old home felt as though its reputation, that of being haunted, was well earned, for how often she paused to listen to footfalls echoing along the corridors. The rooms were furnished with such spindle-legged chairs and tables that the vigorous Scotch girl feared to touch them. The hall had its complement of portraits; courtiers who frowned upon this degenerate descendant of the golden hair and blue eyes, seemingly impatient of her intrusion. Yet here was the one central point from which raged hours of entertainment. The old servant Robert, who boasted of forbears who had followed the first Leroux from Paris to the backwoods of Canada, this Robert was charged with stories of the heroic past. Nothing, not even Madame la Marquise, who represented Royalty to him, could have detached him from his loyal service to the family. He might disagree with his

ruler, but not in open revolt, and in a measure he too was ruler; of peasant origin, he inherited the trait of cunning by means of which he gained his ends when Madame was not accessible to reason. He loved Néonie at first for the sake of her mother, whose runaway marriage he had promoted (to her undying gratitude), but ere long he would have laid down his life for the sweet Scotch lassie, who had walked blindfold into a very network of traps laid by a cruel foe. Néonie soon found that Robert was a powerful friend; any hour of liberty which she enjoyed was due to Robert's clever contrivance; even these rays of entertainment in the halls of the ancestors.

"Mademoiselle should know the history of her forefathers," was Robert's stolid reply, when Madame rebuked his prolixity. Néonie began to rely on the old servant in every crisis that befell her.

Crises were of frequent occurrence. Grandmère's temper was explosive, brooked no opposition; reason she abhorred. Robert as a protective personality intervened in that breach which yawned between the high-spirited Scotch maid and the violent old French woman.

"Mademoiselle should be more patient," Robert would remark as he found opportunity. "True, Madame is extreme, but there is much to try her. All whom she has loved have disappointed her wishes; even the young Seigneur."

"My cousin Raoul, her great-grandson," said Néonie. "What is he like, Robert?"

"Ah! Mademoiselle needs but to look at the portrait of the Leroux hero, Raoul, to see the young Seigneur in his fierce moods."

"Fierce! What a dreadful family!" laughed Néonie.

"Mademoiselle is right; it is a terrible inheritance the Leroux temper. Did I not see a flash of it a moment ago in Mademoiselle's own blue eyes. Blue or black, what matters it! the strain of the family curse is there. Our young Seigneur is of course the true heir to the Seigneurie, but Madame by the French law has absolute control of the estate; she can will it as she desires."

"How did *he* fall from grace," asked Néonie; "and was she very fond of him?"

"Madame adored him; he was of the old race, and to a certain point complacent to her will. But though he had so many characteristics of the old Leroux family, he inherited also from his mother's side, and that, Mademoiselle, was of Huguenot origin."

"This is interesting," said Néonie, scenting war; "pray continue, Robert."

"The young Seigneur was carefully taught by the great Father Rocher, who is noted, Mademoiselle, for his skill in governing the hearts of young people. And yet M. Raoul overthrew his rulers. Ah! what an hour was that! He stood there, Mademoiselle, with his back to the door, and dared them both. Laughed at the threat of disinheritance, threw epithets like hail at the Catholic Church,

said he would live and die worthy the noblest of his ancestors, one Gabriel Morice who was burned at the stake; and walked out bare-headed into the storm, the world without. Ah! what a life was his, but, Mademoiselle, it is crowned with honour. Some friend of his lent him a small sum of money."

"Robert, it was you!" cried Néonie, merrily.

"He went to Paris, Berlin, London. He returned with diplomas, medals; what not! and though he could make a fortune as specialist in cities, he settles here in this small village, and works amongst the poor, trying to free them from the power of the Church which binds them hand and foot."

"Ah! Robert, I suspect you too are a heretic!" cried Néonie.

Robert's stolid face did not change.

"Mademoiselle now perceives the situation. Madame has no heir. She remembers, perhaps forgives——" Robert made a violent effort to swallow, evidently the supposition choked him, "the grand-daughter whose marriage in opposition to her own previous arrangement gave her such a blow. She sends for you; you will inherit the Leroux millions."

"Never," said Néonie. "She hates me. You know she hates me, Robert."

But Robert glided into his pantry, and Madame as she descended the stairs, saw Néonie attentively gazing into the face of the hero, Raoul.

"Ah!" observed the old lady. "The saint of the family. He died in the block house yonder defending the women and children from the enemy, the Iroquois Indians."

"A saint, a fierce-looking saint," cried Néonie, "But the eyes are superb. I am sure people loved him."

Madame's eyes flashed, the girl had thrust a sword through her heart.

"Yes, such men are loved," she said grimly. "Alas! for foolish women."

"It is not foolish to love," said Néonie, throwing down the gauntlet with the superb ignorance of youth.

Madame laughed; her dark eyes swept contemptuously over the fair maid's calm face.

"Love is a fire," she said intensely. "It eats to the core with undying power. It is a pain, an anguish; it lives on food that turns it into one stream with hate. It runs the same course, and cuts itself adrift from peace and repose." She paused, glared at Néonie fiercely, and then said—"Such love *you* will never know. There is no fire in your pulses."

Néonie's answer was interrupted by Robert, who solemnly entered for orders. He beckoned the girl as he left the room.

"It is so bright to-day, and Father Rocher is coming; he will entertain Madame; Mademoiselle might go to the Post Office."

Néonie did not see the anxious look which grew on Robert's face as she gaily set forth on her walk.

"The young Seigneur is right," said he to himself, "she ought not to be here. What does Father Rocher mean by this sudden complaisance to Madame after years of opposition?"

II.

NÉONIE found a letter from home to reward her for her walk, and as it was still early, she rambled about the woods on her return. It was early in June, and the ferns and flowers were springing up under her feet, canaries flashed in the sunlight, robins sang, wild doves cooed, and frogs croaked in the swamps. Nature was racing to achieve her summer miracles after the winter frosts and snows. Forgetful of all, save her intense enjoyment, Néonie followed the winding forest paths, singing in a clear high voice all the Scotch lilts she could think of to keep herself company.

Tired at last she seated herself on a fallen tree, and began to arrange her hat, filled with ferns and flowers which, slung on her arm, had formed a convenient basket; this accomplished, she rose to go home, but found she had lost all sense of direction. Several winding tracks crossed and recrossed, but whichever she took led her back to one central point. Néonie realised she had lost her way; but accepted the situation calmly, without any conception of the difficulty there might be of rescue from her present perplexities. But ere she had time to exhaust herself with fresh efforts, the bushes were pushed aside by a vigorous hand, and a man leading a horse came into the small clearing where Néonie sat waiting light on her path.

The new-comer as he stood, hat in hand, before the girl was no stranger to her; feature by feature was familiar, even the dark soft eyes and wealth of softly curling hair.

"Raoul," she said, with a smile of delight, for she was clannish to a degree. "My cousin Raoul, is it not?"

"Of course," said the new-comer, with a bow worthy of Madame's training, "and you, I know from our mutual friend Robert, you are my cousin Néonie; you have been roaming through the woods and have lost your way, *n'est-ce pas?*"

"Yes," said Néonie tranquilly, "but after all I am not far from a house; I saw a large black dog over there just now. I called to him but he did not come."

Raoul gave a quick glance round, and a swift comprehensive look into the sweet face before him.

"It is mid-day," said he, "and Madame takes lunch at half-past one. We have just time to reach the Seigneurie. Shall we start?"

"Oh, yes!" said Néonie, anxiously, "she does not like to be kept waiting."

A curious smile framed the lips of the young Seigneur; but the

eyes that met Néonie's were beaming with kindliness. Néonie felt strangely drawn to him.

"How true it is," thought she. "Blood is thicker than water. I feel as though I had known him all my life."

Raoul talked to her of her home in Scotland; and as she related with enthusiasm even the smallest incidents of the uneventful life in the old world, he studied the fair speaker, and made up his mind as to his own course of action.

"Cousin Néonie," he said, "we must meet again; soon I hope. See, there is the Seigneurie gate. But, let me suggest that you take the law into your own hands, and return to the peaceful home you describe without delay."

Néonie was astonished into absolute silence.

"You are too young, and, pardon me, too ignorant, to understand what is patent to Robert and myself. You are in the hands of a dangerous enemy."

"Do you mean Grandmère?"

He paused, reflected a moment, then continued—

"Grandmère alone would not necessitate decisive action on your part; it is not for me to judge on that score; but Grandmère is backed by a most subtle and dangerous foe to your happiness, Father Rocher."

"Father Rocher!" cried Néonie; "oh, cousin Raoul, how unjust you are. He comes often and is so kind; just the opposite of all I ever imagined a priest to be."

Raoul looked into the innocent face with despair of making her understand the subtleties of the danger in which she stood.

"You do not believe me, I see," said he, "and yet—— Little cousin, Father Rocher is a Jesuit. I grant you a most charming man. He loves me, his pupil, I am convinced more than aught on earth—except Mother Church. You do not know what that *except* means. His marvellous power over human hearts, which once absorbed every pulsation of my own young heart, who should know better than I—I who was once his bond-slave."

"Ah!" said Néonie, easily. "You are afraid he will influence my religious views. He cannot, you know; I am a Presbyterian.

The statement so simply made was not without force. Raoul saw a flash in the blue eye indicative of staying power, of resistance he would not have credited to so fair a flower.

"If you resist Father Rocher you will learn something of his strength."

"*You* resisted him!"

"I am a man. Yes, I defied him. I was a slave and I broke my chains and stand under heaven to-day a freed man. But you, you are so ignorant, so guileless."

"Oh, I shall defy them too. Grandmère and I have had pitched battles already."

"Robert tells me so."

"Does he tell you everything?"

"Since you have been in the Seigneurie, yes. He and I are leagued together to keep you safe from your foes if we can."

"If."

"*We* know the length of Father Rocher's arm; *you* do not."

The town bell rang the hour.

"I must run," said Néonie, "or I shall be late."

Raoul took both her hands and held them close. "If you knew how reluctant I am to let you go," said he. "Why did they let you come over?"

"Oh, mother was so pleased to think the breach between her and Grandmère was healed; and it is not much to spare her just one year, you know."

"*If you only knew!*" was all Raoul's reply; but Néonie by this time was swiftly running towards the house and did not hear.

* * * * *

The charming Father Rocher paid daily visits to the Seigneurie; Madame complained that Néonie's French was execrable, and the Reverend Father volunteered to give her lessons. During the course of these lessons there was always time given to desultory conversation, and without knowing why, Néonie found herself always the speaker. She informed the Reverend Father, who was always so modest in expressing his own opinion, on several points. She held views as do most young people, and was very sure of her premises; and yet, how curious it was that though Father Rocher never contradicted her, or in any way argued with her, he had by adroit questioning led her to see that she contradicted herself, that her basis for argument was cut away from under her feet, that she was on questionable ground, where she believed herself to stand on rock.

"Clear as a crystal stream, yet not without force," was the verdict. "One so young and so eager for sympathy should not be difficult to manage—well isolated. It was a *contretemps*, that meeting with Raoul, and must not occur again."

How did he know that Néonie had met Raoul?

In the blush that flitted over the girl's face, as Madame exclaimed at finding her studying the pictured face in the hall, the all-pervading sense of the Jesuit read a personal interest.

"The portrait would pass for that of Raoul, the present young Seigneur," said he, *sotto voce* to Néonie.

"Oh, no!" she exclaimed, "the expression is so different." Then she paused. The Jesuit apparently took no notice of her betrayal. Had he not heard? He had stooped to disengage Madame's train from an imaginary nail.

"What we have to do," said he, that night, "must not be delayed."

* * * * *

An epidemic of small-pox broke out in the village, and made it

impossible for Raoul, who was working night and day for the ignorant poor, to see more of his little cousin. He dared not even write to her for fear of conveying infection; but he sent her frequent messages by the faithful Robert. Néonie's walks were restricted to the woods immediately around the house, but during the intense heat of those summer days, she only cared to sit beneath the shade of the grand forest oaks, and read or dream of home and—Raoul.

The personality of Raoul became as an all-pervading power over her gentle soul; perhaps he intended it should be so to counterbalance, if possible, the many-headed hydra which was clutching at the girl's vitality, narrowing her outlook, absorbing her strength. Madame smiled in a strangely sinister manner as Néonie was caught in one after another of the wide meshes of Father Rocher's net. She was already tasting revenge on the heretic grand-daughter, who had fled her roof with the Scotchman. Did they think she had forgotten or forgiven? She had cursed them, that morning when the flight was known, but the delinquents had been happy in spite of that curse. Now! she could grind them under her heel, they should suffer through this blue-eyed maid, whose fair beauty, suggesting her Scotch descent, made her hateful in Madame's eyes.

One afternoon Néonie sat beneath her favourite tree, alone in the forest. Her eyes were on the French lesson, but her thoughts so far away, that the softly-breathed "Néonie" scarcely broke the rhythm of her dream.

"Néonie, little cousin."

She sprang up then and looked round. Raoul stood well in the shade of a neighbouring pine, his eyes smiling at the welcome in the surprised face turned towards him.

"No, not a step nearer," he said, "we must be content to see and speak to one another."

"Robert brings me a message from you every day," said Néonie. "He is so good——"

"Yes, Robert would die for me," said Raoul, quietly, or for one ——I love."

Néonie's heart beat fast, the colour swept her cheeks leaving her pale by contrast.

"Tell me, do you think of me sometimes," said he, bending forward. "No, do not turn away from me, it has been so hard for me to keep away so long. My only comfort has been to send you messages day by day—poor comfort."

"Are the poor people getting well?"

"The plague is burning itself out; it is hard to govern slaves in a crisis. These poor "habitants" are slaves of the Church; superstitious and ignorant beyond belief. Father Rocher and I have had a battle-royal, but I am backed by government now as to vaccination. He has learned again that Raoul Leroux is a free man, and he begins to measure my sword arm accurately. And now for yourself.

The net is drawing close about you. You do not realise the power of the Church in this country; that ere you could get help from home, you could be so disposed of, that none of your relatives would ever get the faintest clue as to your whereabouts."

Néonie smiled.

"Really, cousin Raoul," she said, "that would be tragedy; tragedy in the backwoods!" and her merry laugh rippled in the forest air like music.

"Do you believe in fate, little cousin?" said Raoul very softly, as though he feared the wind might carry his words to listening ears. 'Do you believe in love at first sight; do you believe that two souls meeting for the first time might find such mutual joy that they would never be content again without this newly-found sympathy which floods the life with love."

"Is that a catechism?" asked Néonie, shyly.

"Little Jesuit, do you think I shall accept that for an answer?" said Raoul, his dark eyes full of light. "Néonie, your sweet eyes tell me what I want to know. You are not indifferent to your cousin Raoul."

"Indifferent! oh, no!" said Néonie.

"Néonie, I had a letter from your father this morning in answer to my own. He is now on his way out here, but until he comes he gives me the right to protect you from your enemies."

"My father is coming!" cried Néonie. "Oh, Raoul, you dear, good Raoul!"

Tears of joy filled her eyes, and she sprang across the intervening space to her cousin's side.

"Back, darling! Indeed, you must not come so near," said Raoul tenderly. "And now I see Father Rocher in the distance. He must not find out this news, which will check-mate his little plans so perfectly. Go now, dear Néonie, to meet him; meet guile with guile, and be silent as death too, as to our meeting here in the woods."

"Do not fear," said Néonie. "Oh, I don't mind anything now that my father is coming."

There was a softly breathed "Adieu, little cousin; *prenez garde, ie vous prie*," and Raoul had noiselessly disappeared.

"Meet guile with guile," Raoul had said. Néonie at once made her little effort. She pulled her hat over her eyes, leaned against the trunk of the tree well in shadow and feigned sleep. The Jesuit came and went, making sufficient noise to have wakened the girl had she really been asleep. Néonie congratulated herself on her success in hoodwinking the priest: he went away smiling at the transparent fraud. "She has seen Raoul in the woods," said he to Grandmère, "and now, Madame, a word in your ear."

* * * * *

How did it happen? One by one restrictions on her liberty crept in and galled the high-spirited maid beyond endurance. Néonie

began to learn that the courteous charming Father Rocher had a strong arm. He exacted much from her in her studies, and from his word was no appeal. Pressure was brought to bear upon her observance of the rites of the Church; a portion of the study hour was set aside for instruction in the Catholic faith. How long could this young girl stand against such heavy odds? asked the Jesuit of his experience.

"To the death," was Néonie's staunch reply to this question, as it rose to her lips that very night.

She knelt by the open window, her white face raised to the blue heavens where the regnant moon glided, o'ershadowing the stars. How still and calm was the forest world without! was it possible that wild animals lurked in the shadows? Néonie shivered with dread, conscious that the enemy she was fighting single-handed was more to be dreaded than the foes without. In that moment she formed her resolution, she would openly defy Madame, and then leave her house for ever.

"You think you will convert me," said she quietly to Father Rocher, next day. "I tell you, never, never! I scorn the falseness, the degrading errors of your faith."

The priest merely smiled in an indulgent manner, but Madame was white with fury.

"You need not trouble to teach me anything more," she continued, "for I have made up my mind to return home."

Then with a curtsey which included the subtle priest and the enraged old woman, Néonie calmly left the room, and went upstairs to pack her trunks.

"Raoul need not have been afraid for me," she said to herself. "They accepted my decision quite quietly, there is nothing like being firm."

Poor ignorant Néonie!

Perhaps no one understood what Madame's *white* wrath meant so well as Robert. He crept to Néonie's door after an hour spent with his ear to the keyhole of Madame's boudoir.

"Mademoiselle must fly to-night," said he. "To-morrow it will be too late. No, do not speak. Listen! The block house door is open, a ladder communicates with the upper storey. I shall place it there; you will hide in the dark there until I can communicate with Monsieur Raoul. When I give the signal, so (he tapped on the door) Mademoiselle will creep down to the salon. The window will be open, the path to the block house unobstructed."

Ere Néonie could reply Robert had made one of his mysterious disappearances. The expression of his face startled the courageous girl into something like fear. What did he dread for her? She had defied her enemies and surely could use her own pleasure in turning her back on the inhospitable doors of the Seigneurie, where she, a stranger, had been obliged to endure so much repression.

She did not like to leave the house, though, in the secret manner suggested by Robert, and yet Raoul had told her most emphatically to follow the advice of the faithful old servant in every particular.

When the dinner-bell sounded, Néonie obeyed its summons without delay. Madame treated her with more than usual ceremonial politeness; her black eyes blazed like living coals in her withered white face, otherwise there was no change in the regular order of events.

"You see, Robert," Néonie whispered as she met him on her way through the hall, "I have frightened Father Rocher away, and taught Madame a lesson. I am master now of the situation. They will oppress me no more."

Robert turned pitying eyes on the ignorant child, who was so utterly unable to gauge the power of those into whose hands she had fallen.

"Mademoiselle, believe me, you are in great danger! Once before have I seen Madame white, silent with rage. I know what it means!" He shrugged his shoulders and gesticulated with his hands.

Néonie went to her room, resolved to take the course the faithful old servant indicated.

The evening passed quietly. Madame retired to rest early; the coast was clear ere the clock chimed ten. Robert's signal was delayed another hour, however, and Néonie, throwing a shawl over her head, crept downstairs and out at the parlour window. She took a long breath as she stood under the stars, and then set forth swiftly down the path to the old block house. This path was very narrow and overgrown with tangled vines; Robert, however, had cleared the worst obstructions away, and Néonie ran hastily forwards.

Suddenly the way was blocked. She stood and faced her enemy, who, without one word slowly advanced upon her. She retreated still facing him, as though had she turned her back, like a wild beast he would have darted upon her. How long it took to reach the house she could not know, for the seconds dragged like hours. She was afraid, mortally afraid of this silent foe, and yet faced him with a courage surely inherited from warrior ancestors, who never turned their backs on danger. The window was reached, it opened like a door, and the relative position of the pair was not altered as Néonie entered the house.

At the foot of the stairs, however, the enemy paused, simply pointing upwards with one hand sternly outstretched. With slow lingering step Néonie obeyed; and breathless with terror and horror, as though the coils of a snake were crushing the life out of her, she threw up her window, and gazed helplessly into the silent forest. Where was Raoul?

The clock in the village struck the midnight hour. Néonie, scarcely knowing what might happen, threw herself dressed on her bed, and fell at length into a feverish slumber.

She was awakened by the feeling that she was not alone in the room. She sprang up alertly, and called in challenging tones—

"Who is there?"

A personality, a Medusa-like presence draped in black garments, came from the shadows and stood silently before the girl.

"Who and what are you," cried she. "Speak!"

There was an amused laugh from the doorway, and Madame's voice explained the presence of the new-comer.

"This, Néonie, is Sister Angela from the lunatic asylum across the river. She has taken the vow of silence, so she will not be an intrusive companion. Sister Angela is summoned to take charge of you, since you defy your proper guardians, for the one week which Father Rocher, with misjudged indulgence, insists you shall have for reflection."

"I agree with you, it is misjudged," said Néonie boldly. "I shall return at once, without delay to my parents. It is daylight now, and I know my way well to the village. You cannot keep me if I choose to go."

Again Madame laughed. Néonie shivered at its cruel ring.

"We cannot hold you. Good! Try your strength on Sister Angela; she is accustomed to control lunatics. Enough! You will reflect, my bold child. For a week's time you will permit Father Rocher to prepare you for confirmation. In that case I forgive all, and you will be heiress to the accumulated wealth of the Leroux estate, which Raoul, apostate, has forfeited."

"And if I refuse?" said Néonie, her courage rising.

Madame pointed to Sister Angela.

"From the portals of that asylum which she represents there is no escape. You will be carried thither under an assumed name; dead for ever to the world without. No bird whispers secrets from out those padded walls. You, Néonie McFee, will be dead! dead!"

Madame's voice sank to a fierce whisper, more terrible than the keenest outcry; she vanished, locking the door on the outside, and Néonie was left at the mercy of the sinister stranger.

The blood of the young girl was up; she was no recreant to her race; even the stolid woman watching read power in the courageous young creature's attitude as she faced round upon her.

"Sit down," commanded Néonie; "and as I cannot possibly vanish through walls or locked doors, you can take your eyes off me for a time."

Sister Angela placed her chair where she commanded a view of the whole room, with the window on one side of her and the door at the other. Not a bird or squirrel could move in the trees without but she could see them.

Néonie went to work feverishly to set her trunk in order. She packed and repacked, lovingly handling the familiar objects she had brought from home, absorbing herself in the photographs of her

family, reading her home letters, trying in one way after another to forget her terrible position. And all this time Sister Angela stared at her with her watchful, sly eyes. But for the links she held in her hand of her dear home, Néonie felt that she must have lost her reason.

At mid-day Madame opened the door. Robert entered bearing a tray on which stood a cup and plate. Only a clever physiognomist could have read with appreciation of its power as a mask, the indifferent, dull expression on the old servant's fat, expressionless face. He set the tray down without a glance at Néonie, stepped away, then turning at the door, made a gesture of annoyance—the tray was crooked. He simply walked back to the table and set it straight, but Néonie knew she should find something under the cover.

Sister Angela was sent downstairs to take her *déjeuner*. Madame locked her prisoner's door. Néonie, left alone, feverishly snatched a tiny slip of paper from its hiding-place.

"At midnight.—RAOUL."

She hid the paper just in time. Sister Angela had swallowed her bouillon with despatch, and now took her seat and her watch again.

Néonie went slowly, deliberately on with her dinner. Robert served her with the usual meagre amount of food in the usual courses. With hope of relief so near, Néonie's eyes shone; her expression was almost gleeful.

"Ah, *prenez garde!* the plate is warm, mademoiselle," said Robert quietly.

Néonie knew that he meant to convey a warning to her, and as soon as dinner was over took a book and feigned to read.

The hours dragged past; but for Raoul's written word Néonie must have given way to violent screaming, so unendurable was this black-gowned presence, so horrible the glare of the stealthy cat-like eyes. The village clock rang out the afternoon hours; the shadows stretched across the garden; it was sundown, then dusk. Néonie lighted her lamp, and continued to read. Nine o'clock struck. Robert glided into the room. Néonie detected an anxious expression in his eyes; his voice was scarcely as clear as usual.

"Madame sends Sister Angela a cup of coffee to assist her to keep awake to-night," said he, bowing low before the *religieuse*.

Sister Angela took the offered luxury with greediness. Robert advanced to the table as she drank it to the dregs. Then he turned down the lamp so that the room was almost dark.

"Pardon, mademoiselle, the lamp flares. I must bring you a better one."

But he did not return. Madame locked the door as she passed upstairs, called a shrill "Good-night!" to Sister Angela, and carried away the key in her pocket, Sister Angela of course did not reply.

The house was very silent. Néonie, expectant of she did not quite know what, put out the light, and sat motionless in her chair. The

moon shone into the room, striking full on the figure of Sister Angela. The staring eyes were still directed on the prisoner, but surely unseeing, for the heavy mouth had fallen open, the wide chest was rising and falling in stertorous breathing. It was Néonie's turn to watch; she had now the clue. Sister Angela's head fell back; she snored loud and long. Néonie was free at last of the glare of those dreadful eyes.

Ten! eleven! twelve! How sweet and full the slow, reverberant tones that stirred the silent night hour with rhythmic power! Was that a movement in the tree by her window? Néonie softly raised the sash and looked out. Two dark forms appeared under the tree carrying a ladder. As soon as this was safely placed against her window, one of the figures climbed up and softly said, "Come!"

Néonie could not see the face of the speaker, though she felt the familiar touch thrill to her heart with wild delight; but she obeyed without a moment's delay, and at the foot of the ladder sprang into the outstretched arms with indescribable rapture.

"Father, oh my father!" she cried, clinging close about his neck.

"Yes," said Raoul, "and only just in time to help me steal a march upon our enemies."

"Here is Mademoiselle's hat," said Robert's unmoved voice. "I suspected she might forget it."

* * * * *

There is but one thing further to tell, and this little matter took place just two years later. Raoul was on the eve of setting out on his journey to Scotland to consummate a life-long bond with his little cousin Néonie, when Robert came to him post-haste from Madame.

"Madame is dying. She insists that she must see you," said the faithful old servant.

Raoul obeyed the summons. Madame was all but speechless; a notary had been summoned to take down her last wishes. As Raoul entered the room, the old woman beckoned him to come to her.

"Raoul," she suddenly cried, "Raoul, I love you; more than my life or—my Church! Monsieur"—she turned calmly to the notary—"I am in full possession of my senses. I leave everything I possess without reservation to my great-grandson, Raoul de Leroux."

These were her last words. She held out her arms to the young man, who, stooping, kissed her, and laid her head back on the pillow, sleeping in death.

A NARRATIVE OF GOLDEN ROW.

YES, ma'am, me and my boy lives here: no, he ain't my son, he's my husband. You see, I calls him 'my boy,' 'cause I've known him from a child: his mother was a friend of mine, and one of the best women ever stepped. I'm fifteen years older than him, and that's a fact. When I was living general at Dr. Elliott's, in the square, he was errand boy, and so I come to visit his mother through a bit o' dressmaking; bimeby it come to my stopping at their place whenever I was out of situation. You see I hadn't nobody in the world belonging to me, and her husband was a very light man through attending evening parties and such-like: a handsome man too, as had been a butler, in good families too, but I always say they're the worst, if you come to that.

"So, you see, I'd had a hand like in bringing my boy up; and no sooner was the breath out of his poor mother's body, than his father took and put up the banns with the young person as had made all the mischief; a widow she called herself, and a widow bewitched, I'll allow, with her hair cut in what they call a monkey frill, saving the expression, ma'am. No sooner said than done; she wasn't likely to let him slip through her fingers, and they was man and wife one Sunday morning seven weeks after: my boy, he comes to me with the tears on his cheeks and says, 'There ain't nobody to think of poor mother now, but you and me, Fanny; and who's to look after me, I can't say, now she's gone and my home with her.'

"All of a sudden it came over me to speak: I couldn't let my poor boy stand all alone, and no one to see to him; so I says, 'Well,' I says, 'if you feel that way and ain't got no further plans, I'll take and do for you for better for worse, for richer for poorer'—and with that I stopped dead short, for he was staring at me like anything, and I suppose my face was a bit red.

"'D'ye mean it?' he says quite short and sharp like a man, though he was only nineteen.

"'I do, please God.'

"'Go to church?' says he, getting a bit red too, and twisting his waistcoat button.

"'Just that.'

"'Done!' he says, so shy like, he couldn't scarcely look at me; and so we was married directly, as you may say; for it was a Thursday evening I spoke to him, an' Fridays the gentleman sits at the vestry to take the banns, and allowin' for being called three times, we was married on the Monday, was a fortnight. There wasn't nothing to wait for, for I hadn't got nobody to tell, being out of a situation at the time; and he was his own master, his father having moved down to

Clacton-on-Sea with the widow, and sold up all their bits of sticks; all except what my boy had collared, the day his mother was buried, which was her own, and she left them to him written down, and signed by the landlady.

"So I moved into the room in Golden Row, where his mother had been; this very room as we're a-setting in; and I assure you, ma'am, I missed her every day.

"There was one thing I kept to myself; it was the only secret ever I had. I had a few pounds in the post-office—not much, for you can't save much off a general; it ain't like house and parlours, that come in for tips from staying company, and whistling cabs, and so on; but a pound or two against a rainy day. Mrs. Schroff, at the shop, she says to me, 'Well,' she says, 'Fanny, so I hear you've got a young beau! I doubt but he's seen you coming in and out here with your savings book; 'tain't likely a smart young fellow'd take up with you without,' she says; she's a very plainspoken woman, Mrs. Schroff is. Well, I'd known my boy from a child, but I thought there was no harm being on the safe side, so I just kept my tongue between my teeth about my savings book: he was in good work with a builder at the time, twenty-two shillings a week, and every penny of it brought home; and I thought if there comes illness bimeby, or maybe a baby, it's mine, and I shan't have to come upon him for anything. If you'll believe me, ma'am, a year slipped by without our having so much as a word, let alone an unpleasantness; my boy told me they laughed at him, up at the shop, about marrying his grandmother; 'but,' says he, 'I tell 'em there ain't many of their wives makes them as comfortable as you do me! They'd like to taste your welsh rabbit, Fanny,' he says, 'but I'll grandmother 'em afore they shall!' and there wasn't a man in the Row went out as neat, or come home so steady as mine.

"Whatever made Mrs. Schroff begin about it I can't say: I was feeling a bit down one afternoon, and went into the shop more for a chat than anything, though I always had my bread off her, and passed the time of day, without being what you'd call one to make many friends, which I never was. There wasn't nobody in the shop but our two selves, and she begun at once. 'So you've got your mother-in-law back, Mrs. Bollit,' watching me all the time to see how I'd take it.

"'Seems like it,' I says; I wasn't goin' to let her see I didn't know.

"'I see her talking to your husband last night,' she goes on, 'her and that young sister of hers, the red-haired one; blue velvet she was dressed in, and a feather boar; an' to see that gurl goin' on with Bollit was a thing I shouldn't have cared for, supposing Schroff to 'a' been twenty years younger nor me, and had his hearing which, of course, being a foreigner don't so much matter in his case.'

"I can't tell you, ma'am, how I felt at her words, but I wasn't going to let her notice nothing. 'As for that, Mrs. Schroff,' I says,

'we're all related, you see, and my husband is free to talk to his mother-in-law's sister as long as he pleases. Marriage is respected,' I says, 'among Englishmen more than it is among the French and the Germans, as I understand'—I was all in a tremble as I says it—'whatever age they be!'

"'Free! I should think he was free,' she goes on with a laugh.

"'And I'll trouble you to give me half of a French roll to make up the ounce an' three-quarters that was a-wanting on Monday's loaf,' I says; and I just took it, and threw down the money, and marched out of the shop.

"All that evening I was miserable. It wasn't altogether that I doubted my boy, but them poisonous words kept getting between me and my better judgment; however, I says nothing an' he says nothing. Next day was Saturday, and he brings me the money as usual, only seventeen and sixpence, five shillings short.

"'Not on winter terms a'ready?' I asks as cheerful as I can muster, for when the frost comes, builders' wages goes down: all the same I knew there hadn't been no frost, and what Mrs. Schroff said about a feather boar, nasty dirty fly-away things, full o' fleas, come right into my head!

"'No,' he says hesitating, 'but that's all I've got this week—fact is, Fanny, I was owing five shillings to a friend, and you must manage this time without it!' he went twisting his weskit-button all the while, same as I've known him do when Dr. Elliott used to find fault with him about the medicine bottles.

"'All right,' was all my answer. I couldn't bear to see him acting before me like a child that's afraid he'll be scolded, but I was dreadful unhappy, and couldn't speak all the evening, and when I'd cried myself to sleep I dreampt of a big snake in the waterbutt, with a feather boar for a tail, and a red fringe. But he slep' quiet enough, just like a child. Well, this went on for weeks, and every Saturday he give me his money five shillings short; he'd left off saying he owed a friend, and I just took it without a word, for words had got scarce between us two. He was away often and didn't come home same as he used to; I got mopy, and would set by the hour thinking of the baby that was coming and saying to myself as you can't expect codlins off a crab; Bollits was bad, father and son, and my child wouldn't be likely to be any better than what he come of.

"Well, ma'am, this was how it was one afternoon when there come a telegraft-boy to the door.

"'Bollit live here?' says he; and through me being in the passage I heard him, and calls out, 'Bollit ain't at home!'

"'Then you'd better see to this,' he says, and he gives me the envelope.

"'You read it,' I says, for it was just 'Bollit, Bollit, Bollit,' swimming before my eyes. The boy was civil enough, and read it out slowly, seeing I was all of a tremble.

"'"Bollit, 5 Golden Row. East. Bollit run over come immediately London Hospital:" that's all,' he says. 'You'd better hurry along, missus, for it was given in at 2.41, and it's past four now—there's a lot o' business doing at this time of the afternoon.' Somehow I got to the hospital—I don't know how. Mrs. Tangye, that's my landlady—that had known me for years, and my boy's mother too, she put on her bonnet and came along with me—washing-day and all—'for you ain't in no condition to go alone, my dear, and it 'ud be hard on one that's coming if he should lose father *and* mother before he was born!'

"All the way along, Mrs. Tangye she kept wondering how he come to be run over, and if it was in the dinner hour, and whether it wasn't a mistake was put in the telegraft, and in reality he'd fell off a ladder, which was more natural in the building trade. I didn't answer nothing, and so we got to the hospital, and up the steps, and the porter looks in his book and says, 'Ah, yes, Bollit—in the accident ward—run over by a Pickford's van—this way, ladies, if you please.'

"We went up some stone stairs, and through some passages, and at one corner I see some young gentlemen, no older than Bollit himself, all laughing together over a piece of paper; then at the door of the ward a young lady comes out and a middle-aged gentleman and asks, 'Are you Mrs. Bollit?'

"'Yes, sir, this is Mrs. Bollit, sir,' Mrs. Tangye answers, and I hears her voice sounding away in the distance, so to speak, though she was close beside me, and had me by the arm; 'if so be she's too late, miss, and the poor fellow's gone, you'll tell her gently'—and the young lady in the cap and apron, she comes round to the other side of me and says, 'The poor man was in great pain and suffering when they brought him here; he could hardly give his name and address, but now he is at peace and rest—we mustn't wish him back again.'

"'No, miss, I understand,' and curiously enough there was my voice too, coming from all across the road, as it were; 'we mustn't wish him back; and please, may I go to my boy, miss?'

"The young lady looked at Mrs. Tangye. 'Does she want to go home, do you think?' she asks; but Mrs. Tangye says, 'That's what she always calls him, poor dear,' and the young lady looks at me again; 'No,' I says, 'I ain't goin' to faint; I never do, miss,' and with that, one on each side of me, they leads me up to the bed behind the screen.

"The elderly gentleman, he turned back the sheet, and there lay—oh, not my boy, but his father!

"Mrs. Tangye took me home—the gentleman paid for a four-wheel cab all the way back to our place: my boy wasn't in yet, and just as well; for what with the shock and the rush, I was taken ill, and before nine o'clock it was all over with my poor baby. But I lay there, while Mrs. Tangye tidied about, and somehow I wasn't so unhappy about it as I felt I oughter been, for I'd still got my boy as was alive and well, after all.

"And when I woke in the night, there he was in the chair by the fire, sound asleep, setting up with me!

"Next morning, Mrs. Tangye had told him all, and the first thing he says, 'Poor old dad,' he says; 'now you knows, Fanny, where that five shillings a week went to. He came to the yard one day, weeks back now, and he tells me he went in fear of his life of that woman and her sister. I give him what I could; and they was at me next day to know where he was a-hidin', and how much I should allow him a-week, for Mrs. Schroff at the post office, 'ad told him I'd married a rich woman, and hadn't no right to see my father come on the parish. Somehow I didn't name it to you, for I was ashamed-like after I'd seen dad, and the state he was brought to through those two sluts, and you keeping house so tidy and comfortable for me. I used to get dad to meet me and give him my dinner, and the money, and put the women off the scent of where he was stopping, if they came bothering after me; but I told dad if he called at our house, there'd be an end of any help I might give him, for I wouldn't have my wife messed up with that lot: if I hadn't married a rich woman, I'd married a real good one, I says, and his wife and her sister shouldn't lay their tongues on her.'

"At this I begun to cry, for I was weak-like; and my boy he cried too, for with all his faults he'd loved his poor father.

"To think he should come to a pauper's funeral, a man that had had his dress suit, and looked like a duke in it in the old days—she'd took and pawned that, and sold his policies too, and let his club drop, so that there wasn't a penny to come upon nowhere to give him anything beyond a parish burying.

"Then I lay and thought, an' presently I says: 'You look in my work-box with the shells on it and the view of Dover Cliffs, and under the lid, where the lining's split a bit, you'll see my savings book. I ain't a rich woman, as Mrs. Schroff said; but there's a few pounds there as'll give your father a decent funeral—you can take it and welcome.'

"No, ma'am, his wife didn't offer to do nothing—it's my opinion she was main glad to be shot of him, poor old fellow! She went to the hospital—or sent her sister, I dunno' which—but never asked to view the body or anything respectful; on'y called for his ring, which was my boy's mother's wedding-ring what he'd kept through thick and thin. She got it too, through leaving word she was his wife and her son would see to the burying. So he did, with my little bit o' money, and when he comes home from the funeral he says; 'Fanny,' he says; 'don't you fret over the baby,' he says, 'for we're happy together you and me, and we don't want no third party a-interfering,' he says. I never gave it another thought after that, ma'am, for as long as I've got my boy, I feel I am mother and wife all in one."

A DAY IN A PUBLISHER'S LIFE.

By the Author of "A Double Blue," etc.

June 5th, 1892.

"GENTLEMEN,
"*We have carefully considered*——"

So far I had got in an important letter I had to write to the Firm of Claxton and Underwood, when a whistle from the tube at my side announced that someone was waiting below.

"Yes?" I spoke down the tube.

"Mrs. Cameron wishes to see you, sir."

"Show her up."

Who Mrs. Cameron might be I had no idea, but she was determined that my ignorance on that point should come to an end. She grasped the invariable brown-paper parcel, and took the chair placed for aspiring authors.

"I called about publishing," she said, as if it were probable that she had called about other matters.

"Yes?"

"My husband is an army man," she continued with that tendency to wander from the point which is characteristic of the gentler sex; "or rather he was, and he had to retire when this abominable Bill of Childers' came in, though it wasn't his fault that he was above a certain age."

As she paused I replied—

"It seemed hard in many cases."

"Seemed!" she cried in scorn. "Well, of course, now things are not quite what they were; and there is so little Major Cameron can do at his age, and with the low value of land, and all that, we have to live very quietly."

I looked sympathetic, and wondered when she was coming to the point.

"But we have boys," she continued, "and I am determined they shall go to Eton. To have been an Eton boy is an advantage throughout life."

I said that I had found it so.

"So you were at Eton!" she cried. "How funny! But then people do take up so many things nowadays, even people in society. I wonder if Major Cameron would care to take up publishing."

I gave her no encouragement on this point, so she unfolded her parcel.

"I have written a book," she announced solemnly. "I thought I would earn something, and I believe literature is very paying."

"You would like us to read it, and give you our opinion?"

"Please. I will call any day."

"Thank you. We will write."

"I am often this way," she persisted with the feminine preference or personal interviews.

"It shall have our attention," I said gravely.

"And how much do you think you can give me for it?" said he lady.

"I can offer no opinion on the manuscript till I have read it," I aid, "but I will read it if you will kindly leave it."

"Then I suppose there is no good in my waiting now. I do so ope we shall be able to send Rupert to Eton."

Five minutes more were spent in escorting her down, and satisfying er curiosity on the mysteries of a publishing house. Hardly had I eturned to my letter when Moffat, my partner, looked in.

"I say, is there much on this morning? My wife's sister is coming p from the country and I want to meet her at Paddington. Can you et on without me?"

"Oh, yes, certainly."

His head vanished.

"*We have carefully considered your letter, and*——"

A knock at the door.

"Please, sir, Nops' man has called about the blocks."

For three hours my visitors came in an unceasing stream, my letter ot no further, and the large pile of manuscript by my side remained ntouched.

"At last," I said, having seen out an artless young creature who ad called to inquire why her essay on "Friendship" had not been ccepted for the *Paternoster Observer*, meeting the formula about want f space with the assurance that she was willing to wait, till I was bliged to tell her in a manner that seemed to her brutal that she had o aptitude for writing.

"A man named Wingfield wants to see you, sir."

The name carried me back to the Eton playing fields, and a famous owler of my day.

"Show him up."

The man came in with the diffidence of manner that belongs to hose who have failed in life. He carried a folio under his arm, and is well-worn coat was shiny and white at the seams; but it was the ook in his eyes that arrested my attention—the pitiful look of a dog n pain, which I learnt afterwards told of frequent hunger.

"Someone told me that perhaps you could give me some illus- rating to do," he said bluntly. "I have brought some specimens," nd he opened his folio.

I was not prepared for the excellent sketches he produced.

"You are an artist?" I said.

"I am anything," he answered shortly.

The fanciful monogram, W. Y. W., in the corner of the sketch I held in my hand brought back old memories like a flash.

"Big Wingfield?" I cried, using the old school nickname.

"Yes, but I don't remember you."

"Latimer."

A sudden smile spread over his face.

"Do you remember," he said, and I fancy that he seldom used this phrase now, "the day we beat Harrow at Lord's?"

"Sit down, old fellow," I said, and we dropped into reminiscences of old days. At last I asked: "Where have you been all this time?"

"To the devil."

We made an arrangement about the illustrations, and I gave him part payment in advance.

"Where are you living?" I asked as he rose to go.

"In Long Lane."

Long Lane! the Eton bowler, the fastidious youth as I remembered him.

I could not immediately turn my attention to my letter, for Wingfield's boyish nonsense was in my mind.

"*We have carefully considered your letter, and we are prepared*——"

"Miss Vernon, sir."

"Oh, Harry," said my cousin, coming into the room, followed by her sister, "how are you? We have been to the stores, and thought we would look in as we are near, just to see what it looks like to see you here. How funny! but I suppose you don't have much to do."

I failed to see the ludicrous side of the situation, and said that, on the contrary, I was generally busy.

Fanny had ensconced herself in the big chair, and Mary sat on the arm.

"What men call busy," laughed Fanny. "I suppose you keep an eye on the clerks, and just look important."

"On the contrary, most of my time is taken up in listening to loquacious ladies."

"Oh, how funny you are—isn't he, Mary? We've been to the stores, and we saw Helen there. What a sweet thing in hats she has got. I like the shapes this year. Are you going to Lady W——'s to-night?"

"I believe so."

"What does everybody do here, Harry? Do take us round. It is so amusing, and we have a little spare time. We did not come for anything particular, only you see this comes on our way. Why, you've got Dash there. Dash, old fellow, come here. Oh, Harry, do show us what a real book looks like before it is printed."

I endeavoured to satisfy their curiosity on every point, and everything was pronounced, "funny and amusing."

"So kind of you," said Fanny, "but we must go. Won't you come back to luncheon with us?"

"Thank you. I have no time."

"Well, good-bye. I think I could be a publisher now. It seems very simple."

"*And we are prepared to agree to your terms*——"

The door opened hastily, and my younger brother Gerard looked in.

"Awfully sorry, Harry, but I'm on my way to the club, and I find I've left my money behind. Awfully awkward, don't you know. Would you mind lending me a couple of sovereigns? It's too hot to go back."

Gerard's money was seldom on his person, and this request was not the first of its kind.

"Thanks awfully, won't stay now. Shall see you at Lady W——'s to-night."

——"*to agree to your terms for the transfer of stock in hand*——"

"Mr. Firth, sir."

"Show him up."

Mr. Firth looked hot and indignant.

"I called to see the editor of the *Paternoster Observer*."

"I am the editor."

"Then, sir," said my visitor, his feelings becoming too much for lucid expression, "what did you mean—what do you think—is it well to publish such dangerous papers as 'Criticism of to-day?' I take your magazine, sir, it lies on my table, it may be taken up by my sons and daughters, and you attack the bulwarks of religion."

"Where?" I said, opening the current number of the magazine, and placing it before him.

"Huxley—Clifford Harrison," said the man, glancing at a few names which he fired off like rockets.

"Yes, read on. You must allow the existence of these men whose names seem to offend you. What does the article say? What is the context?"

A quarter of an hour later Mr. Firth left the room with as near an approach to an apology as I should think he ever made. It was getting late. Should I end my letter in peace, and get through some reading?

"Miss W——wishes to see you, sir."

"Show her up."

She came into the room, a quiet girl with a sweet manner.

"You may know me as *Constance Amherst*," she said simply, and I felt the elation that a publisher must feel when he meets for the first time the latest literary favourite.

"No one would confess to an ignorance of *Constance Amherst*," I said.

"I thought I should like to offer you my new book," she said, "because I like the tone of your publications. People laugh at my ideas, but I think a publisher has his style as much as an author. I think we agree on this point. I must not keep you, for I see that you are busy. A publisher's life is very grand. He does so much to make the world better."

She was looking beyond me with a dreamy expression in her eyes.

"He tries," I said quickly, "but much is trivial and commonplace."

"Not in the motive," she said smiling. "Good-bye—I will leave my MS. Perhaps the people are too ideal."

She left me with her short, decided sentences ringing in my mind, and at last I finished the letter.

Then the door opened, and a gentle step crossed the room.

"Harry!"

I looked up to see my wife.

"I thought you might be ready to drive home with me," she said.

"I am afraid not, dear. It has been a busy day."

She looked at the pile of manuscript by my side, and then at me.

"Tired, Harry?"

"Rather."

She told me what she had been doing, and then said,

"I don't care about going to Lady W——'s to-night unless you are set on it."

"But your new dress——" I began.

"Silly boy, do you think this is the only opportunity I have of wearing it? No, Harry, we'll have a cosy evening. Bring home some of that and read while I play Beethoven. I will not stay now. Come soon."

For the first time I began to see the end of my day's work, and I breathed more freely.

In spite of Constance Amherst, the details of a publisher's life seemed anything but grand, and I was glad at last to wend my way homewards.

"Come gently," said Helen taking my arm, "and see the most beautiful sight in the world," and I stepped softly into the darkened nursery, and bent over a tiny cradle where baby was sleeping.

"He grows more like you every day," she said, and I accepted the flattery.

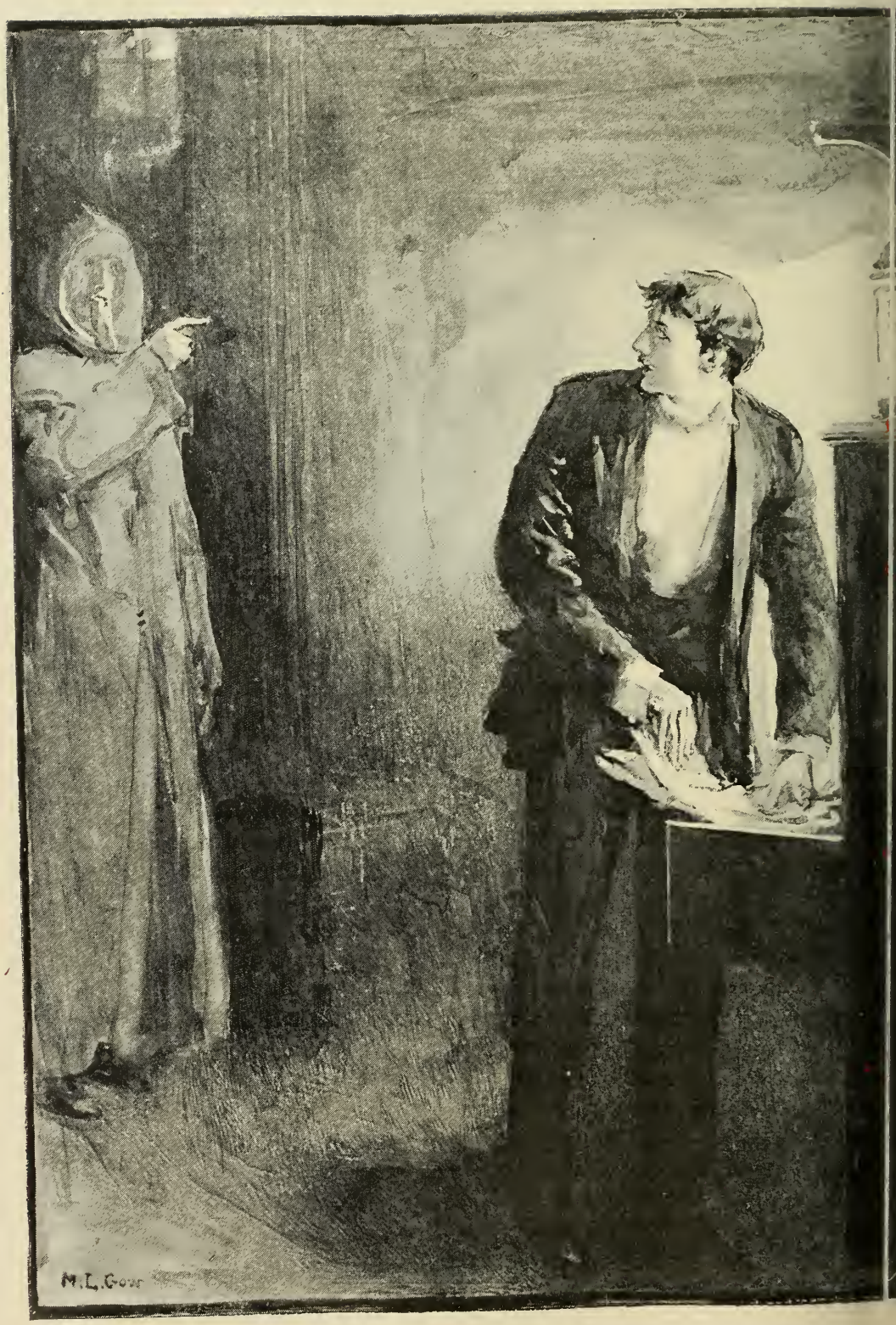
"Isn't this better than Lady W——'s crush?" she asked a few hours later as we sat together in our pretty drawing-room, and I knew that it was meant to show me that she was not disappointed.

Then I told her of my experiences that day, and at some she laughed, but when I spoke of Big Wingfield, the tears came into her eyes.

"Oh, Harry, we must help him. How fortunate that he came to you! But then you always help everybody."

And I left this delusion of hers undispelled.

E. M. Green.



HE SUDDENLY BECAME AWARE THAT HE WAS NO LONGER ALONE.

THE ARGOSY.

SEPTEMBER, 1894.

THE GREY MONK.

By T. W. Speight, Author of "The Mysteries of Heron Dyke."

CHAPTER XXXV.

MATTERS AT THE CHASE.

NO great measure of persuasion was needed on the part of Sir Gilbert Clare in order to induce Lady Pell to extend the term f her visit at Withington Chase.

Sooth to say, age was beginning to tell somewhat upon her ladyship. Vith advancing years her craving to be continually on the move from lace to place began to work less powerfully within her. There were ven times when a growing sense of loneliness made itself sadly felt, nd when the knowledge that she was both childless and homeless ould unseal in her heart a fountain of poignant regrets which would ell to her eyes in tears, all the more salt, it may be, in that they ere, as a rule, so sternly repressed.

Somehow the Chase seemed more of a home to her than any place ie had visited for years. There was a sweet nameless charm about ie old mansion which affected her—she could hardly have told how. ven when she had been a month there she felt no desire to pack up er trunks and betake herself elsewhere. This, for her, was an together novel experience.

It may be that Lady Pell's liking for the Chase was due in part, if ot wholly, to her recollection of a certain happy season she had spent iere when in her teens. It had been the scene of the first and, ossibly, the only romance her life had known—a poor little futile omance, as events had proved—but perhaps none the less cherished n that account; and it was still the home of the man who had been ie ideal of her girlish dreams.

Sir Gilbert, for his part, was well satisfied that his cousin should make the Chase her home for as long as it might suit her convenience to do so. That he would feel her departure as a loss whenever it should take place, he began to realise more clearly the longer she stayed. She was capital company; never otherwise than lively and in good spirits, not a bit in awe of him, and imbued with a sufficiency of the combative element to make her always ready to administer that pinch of contradiction which men like the Baronet need to put them on their mettle.

Without any design or set intention on her part, Ethel had become a great favourite with the old man. As we know, the Baronet had had several sons, but no daughter, and all unwittingly Ethel had slipped into a vacant niche in his heart, of the existence of which he had heretofore been only dimly aware. In Ethel's singing and playing he found something that pleased him exceedingly. And when in some neglected corner she found a heap of old music which had belonged to, and bore the signature of, the first Lady Clare; and when, one evening, without saying anything to him, she ventured to play some of them; and, when he recognised them—voices from the tomb, as it were, silent for thirty long years—his delight was touching to behold. After that Ethel played and sang to him every evening when he would sit with closed eyes, an elbow resting on either arm of his big easy-chair, and the finger-tips of one hand pressed against those of the other, while an expression of great peace and contentment would gradually steal over his grand old features.

"I can't tell what it is, Louisa, that draws me so to that girl," he remarked one day to Lady Pell. "It's not her good looks, though they are undeniable; and it's not her musical abilities, admirable as they are; it's a charm, a something altogether indefinable and elusive to which, if I were to try for an hour, I don't think I could give its proper name. Both her eyes and her voice seem to haunt me; it is as if I had seen the one and heard the other in some prior state of existence. At times they affect me in the strangest possible way."

"I don't wonder at your being taken by Ethel Thursby," returned Lady Pell. "She is a dear girl, and I should like to have kept her with me always; but her aunts would only lend her to me for a time. In one sense I shall be quite sorry when Beilby, my ordinary companion, is well enough to resume her duties."

"You must not let her go yet awhile, Louisa. And yet, the longer she stays, the harder it will seem to part from her when the time comes."

"There is some one besides you and me, unless I am very much mistaken, who will find it harder still to part from her when the time comes."

"And who may that be, pray?"

"That very nice secretary of yours, Mr. Everard Lisle."

"Lisle! You don't mean to say——"

"I mean to say that he's over head and ears in love with Ethel Thursby."

"You astonish me. I have remarked nothing."

"Of course not. It was not to be expected. You are only a poor purblind man. Now, *I* have been sure of it for some time; indeed, I began to have my suspicions almost from the first time they met. I confess that I watch the progress of the little comedy, out of a corner of my eye, with a good deal of interest. I like to see a man in earnest, and that's what young Lisle evidently is."

"He's a fine fellow, and I wish—it seems a hard thing to say—that my grandson were more like him."

"Well, well, Gilbert, you must just accept Lewis as he is, and make the best of him. I am afraid it would not be well for us if we could have people manufactured to our own liking. But, when all is said, I am not without hope that your grandson will ultimately prove to be everything that you could desire."

They were still talking when a black-bordered letter, which had just arrived, was brought to Sir Gilbert.

"It is from my daughter-in-law, Mrs. Clare," he said as he examined the post-marks before opening it. "From the mourning envelope, I judge that her venerable relative is dead."

And such, indeed, proved to be the case. Giovanna wrote to say that her grandmother was no more, and that in the course of a few days she hoped to be on her way back to England. She had written twice to Sir Gilbert previously, just a few formal lines couched in studiously respectful terms, her first note containing the announcement of her arrival at Catanzaro, and her second conveying the news that her grandmother still lingered, but that all hope of her recovery had been given up. Brief and simple though the notes were, the composition of them had been anything but a labour of love to Giovanna. She had expended both time and pains over them, and, after all, had been far from satisfied with the result.

Sir Gilbert, however, had Giovanna but known it, was quite satisfied. To him his daughter-in-law's brief formal communications seemed everything that the occasion demanded. He often thought about her, but never unkindly, and he looked forward to her proximate return with a certain amount of pleasure. He had begun to regard her as an agreeable element in the subdued tenour of his existence; and although Lady Pell far more than compensated for her absence, his cousin would not stay at the Chase for ever, indeed, she might take it into her head to start off at any moment, and when her ladyship should be gone Giovanna would step back into the place which for a little while she had unavoidably vacated.

He now gave Mrs. Clare's note to Lady Pell to read.

"I suppose we may expect her back in about a week or ten days," he presently remarked. "It will gratify me to introduce her to you. I think you will be pleased with her."

Lady Pell's sole reply was a little dubious cough. Liberal-minded though she was in many ways—indeed, she prided herself on being so—she was not, as a rule, prepossessed by foreigners. It was an insular prejudice, but one, unfortunately, which she shared in common with numbers of worthy people, who take credit to themselves for their narrow-mindedness, and are proud of boasting that they are "English to the backbone."

"Her mother was an Englishwoman, as I think I have mentioned to you before to-day," remarked Sir Gilbert with a little flash of the eye. "Consequently——"

"Mrs. Clare is only half a foreigner. It is a fact I had forgotten. Yes, that certainly makes a difference, and I at once admit that I am a little curious to meet her. Being the sort of woman you have described to me—still, for all her forty years, or whatever their number may be, so splendidly handsome—you have not, I presume, overlooked the possibility of her one day marrying again."

The Baronet threw a startled glance at his cousin. "No," he exclaimed, "such an idea never entered my mind."

"I can well believe it," rejoined Lady Pell with a little pitying smile. "You men!—you men! But now that I have made you a present of the idea, you cannot fail to perceive the extreme feasibility of it."

"Um-um. But if Mrs. Clare had any thought or intention of marrying again, why need she have waited all these years? Like the rest of us, Louisa, she is not growing younger."

"Possibly she has met no one whom she cared to marry. But, be that as it may, it must at once strike you that the Mrs. Clare of to-day—the daughter-in-law of Sir Gilbert Clare and the mother of the prospective heir of Withington Chase—is a very different personage in the matrimonial market from the Mrs. Clare of six months ago. If she prove anything like the kind of woman I take her to be, you may rely upon it that she will not long be content to remain buried in a little poky neighbourhood such as this. She will want—and very naturally—to see something of the world, and to assume that position in society to which by your own act she has become entitled." Then, perceiving that her words had had more effect than she had intended, she hastened to add: "But these are merely some of my views, and must not be taken for more than they are worth. It may be that I shall find Mrs. Clare a very different kind of person from anything I have imagined her to be."

Sir Gilbert rose stiffly from his chair.

"What you have just told me, Louisa, has put me about a little, and I have no wish to deny it. There is reason in what you say—much reason. For, when all is said, why should not Alec's widow marry again if her inclination tends that way? Only, I hadn't thought of it—that's where it is—I hadn't thought of it."

A happy accident—if that may be termed an accident which was

the result of the working out of a series of events altogether outside their own control—had brought Lisle and Ethel together again, but neither of them felt inclined to cavil at having been thus unceremoniously treated. Neither did they evince any disposition to grumble when they found that a day seldom passed without bringing them for a longer or shorter time into the society of each other. Everard was at the Chase nearly every forenoon, and frequently stayed for luncheon, while his invitations to dinner were even more frequent since Lady Pell's arrival than they had been before. The latter fact he owed to his ability as a whist-player, for Sir Gilbert, to his great satisfaction, now found that, with Mrs. Tew to make a fourth, he could count upon a rubber as often as he chose to bring the little party together, which, on an average, was three or four evenings a week. It was a pleasure from which circumstances had long debarred him.

Everard's love for Ethel, which her refusal of him had compelled him to crush down with all the force of his will, but which nothing had availed to kill, under the daily sunshine of her presence sprang up into fresh and vigorous life. To all outward seeming, as he flattered himself, his treatment of her in no wise differed from that which he would have accorded to any other young woman with whom circumstances might have brought him into daily contact; but on that point, as we have seen, he was mistaken, Lady Pell having penetrated his secret almost from the first. He strove to so train both his voice and his eyes that neither of them should betray him, and believed—foolish fellow!—that he had succeeded in the attempt. He had no present intention of risking his fate a second time. Just now it was happiness enough to be enabled to see Ethel and to talk with her day after day, to sit by her at table, to hover round her at the piano, and to be permitted to hold her fingers for a moment within his when the time came for bidding her good-night. Once again his tongue should bear witness for him—and he would stand or fall by the result: but not yet.

And Ethel—what of her?

She would not have been a woman had she not known that Lisle loved her. If Lady Pell could penetrate his secret, it was scarcely to be expected that she who was alone concerned should be less clear-sighted, lacking though she was both in years and experience.

With Ethel, although she did not know it, it was love that whispered love's secret to her heart. She heard the whisper but failed to recognise the voice. Only a little while before she had been sorely smitten, and not yet had she quite recovered from the blow; although every day that took her farther away from it helped almost imperceptibly to blunt the sharp edge of pain. A consciousness had begun to dawn on her that within her heart, dormant as yet, or only just beginning timidly to unfold, lay the potentialities of a love very different from that which her ignorance had been beguiled into accepting as the "perfect flower of life." Already for her the

morn of a new and more beautiful love was beginning to break, before the sweetness and light of which all that was left in her memory of the deposed image of Launce Keymer would fade and crumble into nothingness.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A DEED OF DARKNESS.

It was late in the afternoon when Captain Verinder and his nephew arrived at Withington Chase. Under the circumstances, Sir Gilbert could not well do otherwise than invite the Captain to dine and sleep there, and when Verinder, although secretly overjoyed, pleaded that his dress clothes were in his portmanteau at the cloak-room of the London terminus, his excuse was at once overruled. "If that is your only objection, sir, you shall be kept in countenance by my grandson and myself. For once in a way we will all wear tweeds at dinner."

Retaining Luigi's hand in his for a few seconds, Sir Gilbert gazed somewhat wistfully into the young man's face. "You have not brought back much of the tan of travel on your cheeks," he said. "How is that, I wonder? Not for years have we had so hot an autumn as the one now drawing to a close."

"My face never either tans or freckles, sir, however hot the weather may be," explained Luigi with a touch of heightened colour. "It is a fact for which I am unable to account."

"Humph! At all events I'm glad to see that your cheeks can take a blush. I am glad, too, judging from your letters, that you seem to have enjoyed yourself while away, although that was by no means the object I had in view in sending you abroad. I trust that your experiences during the last month will not be thrown away upon you, but that they will be productive of benefit to you in more ways than one." With that he turned away, murmuring to himself: "What can be the reason why he never looks me straight in the face? Why do his eyes always flicker and drop when I try to fix them with my own? It is a bad trait, a very bad trait, and it fills me with a vague sense of mistrust. If he would but confront me with Lisle's open unflinching look! That young fellow's eyes are as clear and honest as the day."

It was an immense relief to Luigi to find that his grandfather made no mention of Miss Jennings. His fear had been lest, during his absence, that young person might have sought out Sir Gilbert and have enlightened him as to the absurd offer which he, Luigi, had made her on her birthday night when under the insidious influence of *Veuve Clicquot*. When, therefore, his grandfather turned away without mentioning "Miss J.'s" name he felt that a great danger had passed him by.

But while one weight had been lifted off his mind, another crushed

him down with a force from which he found it impossible to free himself. Ever before him loomed the black shadow of the deed to which he had become engaged. Sleeping or waking, it held him with a nightmare grip. He ate his dinner not because he wanted or cared for it, but because not to have done so would have laid him open to question and remark. After dinner came whist, Captain Verinder making up the quartette, *vice* Everard Lisle. Ethel and Luigi, being free to follow their own devices, engaged in a desultory conversation, chiefly anent the latter's recent travel experiences, which before long began to languish and presently died out. Then, with a muttered excuse that he was altogether behindhand with English news, Luigi seized on a batch of illustrated papers and buried himself among them, while Ethel's face brightened perceptibly. She saw before her not merely the prospect of a cosy hour with a favourite author, but an escape from a *tête-à-tête* with Mr. Lewis Clare.

Next morning the Captain routed Luigi out of bed at an untimely hour. "I want you to show me Sir Gilbert's study," he said, "and the desk in which he keeps the key of the strong room."

There was no difficulty about doing that, because the study door was never locked overnight, in order that the servants might have access to it betimes, their orders being to have it in readiness for Sir Gilbert by ten o'clock to the minute.

The room was empty when Luigi opened the door and went in, followed by his uncle. "That is the door of the strong room—iron, as you see—and this is the drawer in which the key of it is always kept," said the former.

"And where is the key of the drawer kept?" queried the Captain.

"It is one of a bunch grandfather carries about with him and rarely lets out of his own keeping."

Verinder glanced at the door, then he tried the drawer, which, as a matter of course, was locked, and then he stooped and examined the keyhole.

"As far as I can judge," he said, "the lock is of quite an ordinary kind, and you ought not to experience much difficulty in picking it."

"But what will grandfather think when he finds the drawer unlocked?" questioned Luigi.

"Why, merely that he must have omitted to lock it overnight. Of course the key of the strong room will be there just as he left it, and there will be nothing to arouse his suspicions that it has even been touched. He will simply tell himself that he must be more careful in future, and there will be an end of the matter."

It was too early for breakfast, so they left the house and went for a stroll in the grounds.

"I wish, Lewis, my boy," remarked the Captain cheerfully, "you would try not to look quite so glum and down in the mouth. If you had a murder on your mind you could hardly look more wretched than you do. Do, for goodness sake, assume a cheerfulness; even if

you can't feel it—though what cause you have for being anything else than cheerful, I cannot for the life of me imagine."

"Oh, I'm not like you; I haven't nerves of cast iron; I wish I had," retorted Luigi. "Be cheerful, indeed! It's all very fine, but how is it possible for me to look other than down in the mouth when I remember the desperate business I'm booked to go through with three nights hence?"

"Desperate business, indeed! What nonsense is this? There's nothing desperate about it, nothing whatever. Here's the affair in a nutshell: you wait in your room till the clock strikes midnight; then you kick off your shoes, steal downstairs in the dark, and make your way to the study. Then you open the slide of your dark lantern and proceed to manipulate your picklocks. After a minute or two the lock yields to your coaxing; you open the drawer and there lies the key you want, ready to your hand. Five minutes later the bonds are yours. By half-past twelve you are not merely back in your own room, but in bed and asleep. *Voilà tout!* Desperate business, quotha!"

For sole reply Luigi shrugged his shoulders and spread out the palms of his hands with one of those indescribable gestures which an Englishman may perhaps caricature, but cannot even passably imitate.

Although Captain Verinder had had no intimation to that effect he was quite aware that his visit was expected to come to an end some time between breakfast and luncheon. Accordingly, as soon as the former meal was over, he proceeded to make his adieux. Having said good-bye to Lady Pell and Miss Thursby, he turned to Sir Gilbert, who had already rung the bell and ordered the dogcart to be brought round, and who now accompanied him as far as the entrance hall, with Luigi bringing up the rear. While waiting they chatted about the weather and other indifferent topics. Presently the dogcart drove up and Luigi flung wide the door. Then Sir Gilbert drawing himself up and putting on his most grandiose manner, said "We shall look to see you again at Withington Chase before very long, Captain Verinder." It was vague and yet sufficiently courteous. Then, as the Captain bowed and murmured his thanks: "I need scarcely tell you how very much obliged I am to you for the care and attention you have lavished on my grandson during the time he has been under your charge, and, as a proof that such is the case, I trust you will do me the favour of accepting this trifling recognition at my hands."

As the Baronet turned back into the house after favouring Verinder with a parting wave of the hand as the latter was being driven off, he muttered to himself: "I can't help it, I really can't, but I do *not* like that man. Of course it's the sheerest prejudice on my part, and knowing it to be such, I am all the more bound to do my best to get the better of it."

When Captain Verinder opened the envelope which the Baronet had pressed into his hand at parting, he found inside it a cheque for thirty guineas. "A thousand thanks, my dear Sir Gilbert!" he exclaimed with a chuckle. "I don't mind how often you employ me on the same terms. You are obliged to me for the care and attention I have lavished on your grandson, eh? What a pity, in one sense, it is that one dare not enlighten you about the little Brussels episode!"

In accordance with the plan agreed upon between himself and his nephew, the Captain took the first train up to town, but only to return to Mapleford in the course of the forenoon of the following day, bringing with him a set of picklocks, a dark lantern and an old portmanteau. He again took up his quarters at the *Crown and Cushion* hotel, where Luigi called upon him in the course of the afternoon. Then was the purpose for which the portmanteau had been brought from London made manifest, which was to enable Verinder to give his nephew an object-lesson in the art of lock-picking, in which the latter proved himself no inapt pupil.

The day was Saturday, and it was decided that the attempt should be made the following night, because it was an understood thing at the Chase that on Sundays the house should be shut up and every one retire an hour earlier than on week-day nights. Supposing that all should go off successfully, Luigi would conceal the stolen securities in his own room till the morrow, taking the first opportunity that should offer to make his way with them to the *Crown and Cushion*, where his uncle would relieve him of them, and at once hurry off to London, there to negotiate the sale of them through that "safe channel" of which he had previously made mention to his nephew. The Captain did not let Luigi go without once more impressing on him that, if he only carried out to the letter the instructions laid down for him and did not lose his nerve, he ran absolutely no risk of detection. On the other hand, should the scheme, through some blunder on his part, prove abortive, he must be prepared to accept the consequences. In that case, the whole discreditable transaction with Mr. Henriques, and what gave rise to it, would inevitably be brought to Sir Gilbert's notice, with a result which it was impossible to foresee, but which, in any case, must prove nothing short of disastrous.

Never before had Luigi Rispani spent so miserable a Sunday, and yet it came to an end all too soon for him.

At the usual hour everybody retired; indeed, Luigi had crept away some time before without bidding good-night to anyone. With his ulster wrapped round him—for the autumn nights were chilly—and lighted by a solitary candle, he sat shivering and quaking in his bedroom, waiting for the stroke of midnight. It came, after what seemed an interminable time, a thin tinkle of sound from the old case-clock on the gallery staircase. With the last stroke he stood up, dropped the ulster off his shoulders, and slipped his feet out of his

patent shoes. Then he unlocked his portmanteau and took therefrom the bunch of picklocks, the dark lantern, and a travelling flask filled with brandy, into the cup of which he poured a liberal measure of the spirit and drank it off without drawing breath. Then he set light to the wick of the lantern, shut the slide, and put it into one of the pockets of his velvet lounging jacket, and the picklocks into the other. That done, he blew out the candle, crossed to the door, opened it and stood listening intently for fully a couple of minutes. Then he stepped out into the pitch-dark corridor and drew the door to after him. Traversing the corridor with noiseless footsteps, he emerged on the gallery which overlooked the entrance hall. Here he paused to listen again, but darkness and silence had the mansion to themselves. It was the work of a minute to cross the gallery, pass swiftly down the broad old stairs and so into the right-hand corridor on the ground floor, the second door in which was that of Sir Gilbert's study. By this time Luigi's heart was palpitating at such a rate that he was compelled to pause for a few moments with his fingers on the handle of the door till its beatings had slackened. Then he pushed open the door and went in.

Again he waited, scarcely breathing, while one might have counted six slowly. Then, drawing forth his lantern, he pushed the slide halfway back and shot a gleam of light around. All the familiar features of the room were there just as he had seen them last.

Thus far everything had gone so well with him and so exactly as his uncle had predicted it would, that he began to gather courage, and even caught himself smiling at his own exaggerated fears. Well, it was his first attempt in that particular line of business, so that every excuse ought to be made for him, and in all sincerity he hoped it would be his last.

By this he had placed the lantern on his grandfather's desk and had begun to manipulate the picklocks. As the Captain had inferred, the lock was only an ordinary one, and after labouring for about three minutes Luigi succeeded in picking it. His heart gave a great bound as he heard the click of the bolt.

Two seconds later the key of the strong room was in his hand. Taking the lantern in his other hand, he crossed the floor, lifted the metal flap that covered the keyhole, inserted the key, turned it and pulled open the massive iron door. Drawing a deeper breath than common he stepped across the threshold, lifted the lantern above his head and stared around.

The strong room at the Chase had at one time formed part of the room now used by Sir Gilbert as his study. It was his father who had caused the dividing wall to be built, and had turned the smaller chamber into a depository for family papers, leases, deeds, securities and what not. One side of the room was occupied by a row of shelves having a series of cupboards and drawers below them, while two large japanned boxes took up a considerable portion of the floor

space; but, even then, there was room enough and to spare to stow away all the archives of the Clare family for generations to come. The room was lighted by a small, barred, oval window high up in the wall.

The drawer in which Luigi had put away the American bonds, on the occasion when his grandfather had claimed his assistance owing to the temporary absence of Everard Lisle, was labelled B, and after his preliminary glance round, he at once made straight for it. Placing his lantern on the nearest shelf, he pulled open the drawer, which was without lock or fastening of any kind.

Yes, there lay the identical bundle of papers which he had placed there several weeks before, and which, in all probability, had never since been touched. The bonds, which were tied together with green tape, must have numbered a score at the least, but it had been decided by Verinder that it would be unadvisable to abstract more than four of them, so that, even should Sir Gilbert have occasion to handle the bundle, he would scarcely discover the loss, unless he should happen to count those that were left. The proceeds of the sale of the four bonds would not only suffice to clear off the note of hand held by the executors of Mr. Henriques, but would, in addition, provide uncle and nephew with a welcome supply of ready money.

Luigi, with the bundle of bonds between his fingers, was stooping over the lantern and examining the knot in the green tape which held them together, when he suddenly became aware that he was no longer alone. He had not heard a sound, and yet, with an indescribable creeping of the flesh and, as it seemed, a stoppage of all the pulses of his being, he felt, he knew, although he could not have told through what channel the knowledge had been conveyed to him, that he was being watched by someone or something from behind. With a gasp that constricted his heart like a vice, he slowly turned his head, to see standing on the threshold, clearly outlined in the semi-darkness, and seeming from the depths of its cowl to be gazing fixedly at him—the figure of the Grey Monk!

A cry of terror broke from his lips, the bundle of bonds dropped from his nerveless fingers, his knees gave way under him, and sinking to the ground, he covered his face with his hands, and so shut out that dread appearance. An instant later he heard the heavy door swing sullenly to, and its bolt shoot into the socket. He was a prisoner in the strong room.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE DEFEAT OF ROGUERY.

In the course of the preceding month the apparition of the Grey Monk had been seen on three different occasions after its first

appearance to Bessie Ogden, each time by one or another of the domestics at the Chase. Bessie had been scouted and scolded both by Trant and Mrs. Burton, the housekeeper, till at length she was almost ready to believe that she must have been the victim of an optical delusion; and yet, strange to say, it was to no less a person than Trant himself that the Grey Monk next appeared. It was late at night—close upon midnight, in fact—when Trant, who had been some time in bed, but was not yet asleep, suddenly called to mind that he had inadvertently left his bunch of keys downstairs in the servants' hall. On no account was it advisable that he should leave it there till morning; the other servants rose before he did, and there was no telling, with his keys at their command, in what way they might choose to take advantage of his oversight. It would never do to leave such a temptation in their way. Accordingly, he scrambled into a few clothes, thrust his feet into a pair of slippers, and started to go downstairs.

He got as far as the gallery, and then stopped, suddenly frozen to the spot. There, pacing slowly to and fro by the light of a half-moon, which streamed in slantwise through the east window, with bowed head and hands clasped in front of him, was the Grey Monk! Trant's jaw fell, and his eyes seemed to start from their orbits. A moment or two he stared; then he turned and, without a word or a sound, made his way back to his room, shaking in every limb like a huge jelly, and in mortal dread lest a ghostly hand should clutch him from behind.

Next morning he sought an opportunity of unburdening his mind to Sir Gilbert, only to be snapped at and told that he was an old fool for his pains.

"Let me hear of your having whispered a word about this idiotic rubbish, either in the servants' hall or outside the house, and it will be worse for you," said the Baronet, in his most minatory tone. "I'm ashamed of you, Trant, at your time of life."

For all that, Sir Gilbert did not rest till he had told Lady Pell, who in return confided to him his grandson's adventure in the spinny, as related to her by the latter.

"It is most annoying—most disturbing and annoying," said the Baronet, "and I don't at all know what to do in the matter. Perhaps the best thing will be to do nothing, but to keep on ignoring the whole business as I have done from the first. How is it the apparition never troubles me? I only wish it would! It would not escape me, I warrant you, till I had found out something definite about it. Let us hope, however, that we have heard the last of it for a long time to come."

But it was a hope not destined to be fulfilled.

In the course of the following fortnight two more appearances were reported to the Baronet, both coming from members of his own household. In these cases the figure was avouched to have been

encountered outside the house and in two widely separated parts of the grounds.

When, on the morning to which we have now come, Mr. Lewis Clare failed to make his appearance at the breakfast table, Sir Gilbert, in something of a huff, sent a servant to his room with an ironical inquiry whether they might expect to see him downstairs by luncheon time. Presently the man came back with the news that Mr. Clare was not in his room and that his bed did not appear to have been slept in. Thereupon the Baronet's eyes met those of Lady Pell. "What fresh folly has he been guilty of? What further disgrace is he going to bring upon himself and me?" were the questions they mutely asked. But to the servant he merely nodded and said, "That will do."

A little later, when her ladyship and Miss Thursby got up from table, he remarked to the former, "I will see you in the course of the morning"; which meant, "As soon as I have any news you shall be told it." Then to himself he added, "I suppose I must employ Lisle to hunt him up again."

He lingered over his breakfast this morning in a way very unusual with him, as if hoping against hope that, from minute to minute, his grandson might make his appearance.

He was leaning back in his chair, a prey to a host of bitter thoughts, when Trant, looking at once mysterious and important, entered the room, carrying in one hand a letter, and in the other a large key.

"If you please, Sir Gilbert," he said, in deprecatory tones, for he knew how ill his master brooked being disturbed when in a brown study, "this letter, addressed to you, with the key of the strong room, has just been found on your study table by the housemaid whose duty it is to dust the room. As the letter is marked 'Immediate,' I thought that perhaps——"

"The key of the strong room lying on my study table, do you say?" broke in Sir Gilbert. "How could it possibly have got there?"

While speaking he had taken both the key and the letter. Having put on his glasses he looked at the address on the letter and shook his head. The writing was wholly strange to him. Wondering greatly, he laid the key on the table in front of him and broke open the envelope. Trant stole out of the room on tiptoe; he seemed to scent a mystery.

"Should Sir Gilbert Clare," began the letter, "feel anxious as to the whereabouts of his self-styled grandson he will find him locked up in the strong room, the key of which accompanies this missive. It will be for the young man to explain to Sir Gilbert's satisfaction the nature of the business which took him there between twelve and one o'clock this morning.

"Further, it may be as well to open Sir Gilbert Clare's eyes to a fact in respect of which he seems to have been deliberately hood-

winked. Luigi Rispani is *not* his grandson, but merely a nephew of the woman who married John Alexander Clare. The said John Alexander Clare had but one child—a daughter—who died when a few months old. In accepting Luigi Rispani as his grandson Sir Gilbert Clare has allowed himself to be made the victim of a fraud.

"One Who Knows."

For full ten minutes after he had finished reading the note Sir Gilbert sat without moving, his eyes closed and his chin sunk on his breast. So old and worn and white did he look that he might have been taken for one already dead. Many times in his life had he drunk deep of the waters of bitterness, but perhaps never before had they tasted so utterly bitter. For the moment his soul cried out, "I can bear no more! Give me death—give me anything rather than this!" But presently the strong man within him, which was not yet wholly overcome, began to reassert itself, and a voice seemed to say to him, "If what you have just heard be the truth, then is it better that the truth should be known, at whatever cost to yourself and others. Anything is better than that you should remain the unwitting participant in a living lie." He opened his eyes, sighed and sat up. What a change had come over his life in a few short minutes!

Presently he touched the handbell on the table, to which Trant, who had been listening for it, at once responded.

"Present my compliments to Lady Pell, and tell her that I am very desirous of having a word with her here, and as soon as Mr. Lisle arrives request him to come to me." He felt that he must share his burden with someone; it was too weighty to be borne alone.

Lady Pell was quickly on the scene.

"Sit down, Louisa, and oblige me by reading this, which was brought me a few minutes ago," said Sir Gilbert as he handed her the letter.

She took it without a word. When she had read to the end, she turned a scared face on her kinsman.

"This is indeed terrible, if it be true," she said as she gave him back the letter.

"Here is the key of the strong room to confirm it."

At this juncture Everard Lisle entered the room. At sight of Lady Pell he was about to retire, but Sir Gilbert motioned to him to come forward. "Read this, which was found on my study table about half-an-hour ago," he said.

Lisle, standing within a yard of his elbow, did as he was told. He, too, was utterly dumbfoundered and for a few moments knew not what to say. Then a thought struck him. "According to this, sir, Mr. Lewis is still locked up in the strong room."

"Aye—like a rat in a trap," replied the Baronet grimly. "Suppose we go and release him and hear what he has to say for himself. Do

you take the key, Lisle. Come, Louisa; I must ask you to keep us company. This seems to me an affair which may necessitate the presence of witnesses."

"Now, be good enough to unlock the door of the strong room," he said to Lisle when they had reached the study.

Everard did as he was told and pulled wide the heavy door.

"Anybody inside?" demanded Sir Gilbert sharply. He was standing just behind Lisle, but his eyes failed to pierce the semi-obscurity of the room.

"Mr. Lewis Clare, sir," replied Everard.

"Ah, it *is* true, then!" He drew in his breath like one suddenly struck in a vital part and caught at Lisle's shoulder. A shiver passed over him from head to foot, but his voice was firm enough when next he spoke.

"You there, come out—come out this instant," he commanded.

Never was there a more abject-looking being than he who responded to the summons, with his blanched face, his dishevelled hair, and his fear-distended eyes. He seemed to crawl rather than walk into the outer room. Sir Gilbert pointed to a chair. "Seat yourself there," he said. The look with which he regarded him was a mixture of pity, contempt and scorn.

Then, in an aside to Lady Pell, he added: "I thank heaven that not a drop of my ancestors' blood runs in this craven's veins. But pray be seated. This may prove to be a lengthy business." As he spoke, he drew a chair forward near his own and they both sat down. Then turning to Everard, he said: "Mr. Lisle, I think I have heard you say that you write shorthand."

"Yes, Sir Gilbert."

"Then station yourself there opposite me. I want you to take notes of the questions I am about to put to this wretched young man and of his answers to the same."

There were so many questions he wanted to ask that for a few moments he seemed at a loss where or how to begin. Luigi, of course, knew nothing about the letter which had reached him so mysteriously with the key of the strong room, and was still unaware that Sir Gilbert had the slightest suspicion of the gross imposition of which he had been made the victim.

For a brief space Sir Gilbert seemed lost in thought, then lifting his head and bending on Luigi from between his contracted lids a look which caused the young fellow to shrink and cower even more abjectly than before, he said: "Luigi Rispani, for that is your name, I know you at last for the vile impostor and cheat that you are. Whether you are aware of it or not, let me tell you this: you have been guilty of that which would inevitably consign you to a felon's cell should I decide to proceed to extremities against you, and, indeed, you deserve nothing less at my hands. But what I may decide to do in the matter will depend in a

great measure upon yourself. Answer the questions I am about to put to you truthfully and without prevarication, and I may be induced to deal leniently by you. Lie to me, or strive in any way to throw dust in my eyes, and the moment I discover you in the attempt I will have you given into the custody of the police and will proceed against you with the utmost rigour of the law. What say you, sir? Are you prepared to tell me the absolute and positive truth without a shadow of concealment on your part, or are you not?"

"I *will* tell you the truth, Sir Gilbert, and nothing but the truth; I really will," whined Luigi, who was seated sideways on a chair, huddled up and with one leg crossed under him, his back arched and his head sunk between his shoulders. Every minute or two he was seized with a spasm of nervous trembling, resulting partly from fright and partly from the chill due to his long imprisonment in the strong room.

"So be it," replied Sir Gilbert grimly. "But bear this in mind, that I know more, far more than you think I do." He paused, cleared his voice and then continued. "Luigi Rispani, you are *not* my grandson—that I know already. But tell me this: what relation are you to Captain Verinder, and also to the widow of my late son, John Alexander Clare?"

"Captain Verinder is my great-uncle. Mrs. Clare is my aunt—my father and she were brother and sister."

"How, and with whom did the fraud originate, which led to your imposing yourself on me as my grandson?"

"It was all my great-uncle's doing. It was he who originated the scheme, and it was he who persuaded my aunt and me to join him in carrying it out."

"After all, then, my instinct was not at fault," murmured Sir Gilbert to himself. "It was not prejudice, but Nature's own monition that bade me beware of Verinder."

"You see, Sir Gilbert, this is how it was," went on Luigi, who now seemed eagerly anxious to unbosom himself. "When Mrs. Clare came to London she knew nothing about her husband having been your son. He died in America, and, as it would appear, without having told her anything about his relatives in England. It was Captain Verinder who ferreted out the facts of the case, and everything that followed was due to him. Mrs. Clare's only child had died when it was a few months old, but he persuaded her that if she were to introduce herself to you, bringing a son and heir with her, she would have a far greater claim on your generosity, and might count upon a very different reception at your hands, from any that would be given her as the childless widow she really was. Of myself I can only say that I was weak enough to be overborne by my uncle's persuasions, and—and that I ultimately consented to allow myself to be passed off as your grandson."

Luigi ceased, and for a little while no one spoke. Sir Gilbert, in an

absent way, was rubbing his eyeglasses with his pocket-handkerchief, and apparently turning over in his mind what had just been told him. Looking up at length, he said: "You have been frank with me so far, or so I have reason to believe. I hope you will not be less so in answering my next question. Tell me, then, if you please, to what circumstances it was owing that I found you locked up in my strong room."

Luigi hung his head in a way he had not done before, while two spots of vivid red flamed out on his sallow cheeks. Then, flinging up his head with a sort of half-defiant air, he said: "I promised to tell you the truth, Sir Gilbert, and I will. Last night, after waiting till the clock had struck twelve, I came here, picked the lock of your drawer, found the key of the strong room, opened the door and went inside. My intention was to abstract certain American bonds which I knew were there, and pass them over to my uncle for him to dispose of."

"This latter transaction, then, was one in which your uncle was also mixed up?"

"It was his notion entirely, that I should get possession of the bonds. We were both cornered. Nearly all the money you gave us for travelling purposes, had been lost at a Brussels gaming-table. We succeeded in borrowing a hundred pounds on our joint note of hand, which will fall due about a week hence. In order to meet it and so keep the affair from coming to your ears, which it otherwise inevitably would do, my uncle egged me on to abstract four of the bonds in question, the proceeds of the sale of which would have extricated us from our predicament."

"As pretty a piece of villainy as I have heard tell of for many a long day!" remarked Sir Gilbert. "But you were disturbed by someone when in the midst of your nefarious work, otherwise I should not have found you this morning under lock and key."

Luigi nodded, and his eyes, shifting for the first time from Sir Gilbert's face, turned to Lady Pell and then to Lisle, with a look which neither of them could fathom.

"And who was that someone?" demanded Sir Gilbert. "Some member of my household, as a matter of course; still, I fail to understand why—eh, what is that you say? I did not catch your words."

The words uttered at first in little more than a whisper, were now spoken so that all present could hear them.

"It was the Grey Monk who shut me up in the strong room."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS.

LUIGI RISPANI'S quietly spoken words sent a simultaneous thrill through his three listeners.

It may be said to have been the very last answer to his question which Sir Gilbert had expected to receive. Indeed, so disconcerted by it was he, that for a few moments he sat like a man mentally bewildered, who has been asked to accept a statement which his reason refuses to credit, but which he is utterly without the means of refuting. It will be remembered that Lady Pell had already told him of Luigi's strange experience that night in the spinny, besides which, there were all those other occasions of late when the apparition was said to have been seen by different members of the household—a body of testimony to which, when considered in the aggregate, he could no longer refuse to accord a certain amount of credence. There were circumstances, however, connected with this last alleged appearance which put it on an entirely different plane from the others, and which could be explained away by no theory either of optics or of self-created illusions with which Sir Gilbert was acquainted.

"And do you mean deliberately to assert," he said at length, addressing himself to Luigi, "that what you have just told us with regard to this so-called Grey Monk is the positive truth, and not an audacious attempt on your part to smother up the real facts of the case?"

"It is the absolute truth, Sir Gilbert, incredible though it may seem. I had heard no sound, but all at once some instinct told me that I was no longer alone. I turned, and by the light of my lantern saw the figure standing in the shadow a little way back in the other room. Its face was towards me, but so hidden by its cowl, that hardly anything could be seen of it except its long grizzled beard. What followed, I hardly know, only that I heard the door shut and the key turned, and realised that I was a prisoner."

"I presume that neither of you spoke to the other?"

"Not a word passed between us."

For a little while Sir Gilbert remained buried in thought. Then he said: "You may go for the present and remain in your own room till I send for you. In what way I may ultimately determine to deal with you I have not yet made up my mind."

When Luigi—glad enough, one may be sure, to get away—had crept out of the room with the air of a whipt cur, Sir Gilbert turned to Lisle. "You must get through your work without me this morning. I need scarcely tell you that I am very much put about by this business. Preserve the notes you have taken, and when you have an hour to spare you may write them out for me. Perhaps I may never need them, but one cannot tell. Come, Louisa."

They went no farther than the morning-room. Lady Pell could not help seeing how shaken Sir Gilbert was, and at her persuasion he drank a glass of sherry.

"The shocking disclosures of this morning," he began after a few minutes given to silent cogitation, "require, as it seems to me, to be considered from two very opposite points of view. On the one hand, there is the audacious palming off upon me of a supposititious grandson and all the side issues resulting therefrom—as to which I shall have something to say later on. On the other hand, there is this mysterious affair of the Grey Monk, to whose most opportune interference we seem to owe it that Captain Verinder's vile scheme has suffered such a signal collapse. Now there cannot, I think, be the slightest doubt that, let the origin of the previous appearances have been what it may, there was nothing in the least degree supernatural about last night's manifestation. That it was a being of flesh and blood as much as you or I, to my mind admits of no question."

"There I agree with you, Gilbert," remarked Lady Pell. "It was no ghost that locked up Luigi Rispani in the strong room."

"And it was no ghostly hand that wrote the letter which has served so completely to unseal my eyes."

"But who can this mysterious personage be, and where can he have sprung from?"

"And whence and from whom did he obtain the information embodied in his letter to me, which we now know to be absolutely true. Those are questions, Louisa, which there seems little present probability of either you or I being able to answer."

"At any rate," said Lady Pell with a shrug, "it's far from pleasant to know that, after everybody is in bed, the house is perambulated by someone who, to answer some purpose of his own, chooses to disguise himself as the family spectre. What becomes of him in the daytime? Who supplies him with food? He would seem to be able to come and go just as he likes, because he has mostly been seen out of doors in one part of the grounds or another."

Sir Gilbert shook his head. "Mysteries all; more than that we cannot say. But stranger than all to me is the fact that, whoever he may be, he should have a knowledge of certain circumstances in the life of my son which only someone intimately acquainted with him during his brief American career would be at all likely to have. But from beginning to end the affair is altogether beyond my comprehension."

"The allegations conveyed in the letter affect Mrs. Clare most seriously."

"They do indeed. You have heard what Rispani said—that she was a consenting party to the fraud concocted by Verinder. But her every action from the time of her introduction to me affords incontestable proof of the fact. Oh, it is vile—vile! I could not have believed it of her. No one could have appeared more open and

straightforward than she. I had grown to like her, Louisa—to like her very much. I shall feel the blow for many a day to come—no, not for many, because at the most my remaining days can be but few."

"According to the last note you had from her, Mrs. Clare may be here any day."

"Almost at any hour, unless she should choose to break her journey at London instead of coming direct through to the Chase."

"You will see her when she arrives?"

"It will be no more than just that I should do so. Every opportunity shall be afforded her of refuting the charges which have been brought against her, but that she will succeed in doing so I greatly doubt."

Again for two or three minutes he seemed lost in thought, then he went on: "I cannot deny that, in a certain sense, it is an immense relief to me to find that Rispani is not my grandson. I have felt from the first, not merely that he would fail to be a credit to the family, but that he would be nearly sure to entail positive discredit on it, and that the unsullied name of the Clares would be passed on by him fouled and dishonoured to whomsoever might succeed him. Yes, I can afford to be very thankful that, being such as he is, he is proved to be no grandson of mine. Better, far better, that the direct line should die with me than that it should be continued in one so utterly unworthy of the traditions of his race. But with Alec's widow it is different. Rispani the impostor we have done with; he will go and trouble us no more; but she—she will still remain my daughter-in-law; how vilely soever she may have acted, whatever she may have been guilty of, the tie is one which cannot be severed."

"With regard to Rispani and that unscrupulous uncle of his, I suppose it is not your intention to take proceedings against them?"

"It would only be treating them after their deserts were I to do so. But the affair will be productive of talk and scandal enough without that."

At this juncture there came a tap at the door which was followed by the entrance of Everard Lisle.

"Mr. Luigi Rispani has just left the house, sir," he said. "I thought it right that you should be told as soon as possible. This note, which he sent me by one of the servants, explains his reason for the step."

Sir Gilbert took the note, and having adjusted his glasses, he read aloud as follows:

"Dear Lisle.—After what has come to light this morning I find I have not enough courage left to face Sir Gilbert a second time; consequently think it best to take my departure and so save all further bother.

"As I don't suppose anybody will think it worth while to confiscate

my few traps, will you be good enough at your convenience to have them forwarded by rail to the address given below.

"With reference to what passed this morning, it seems to me that my wisest plan is to say nothing. *Qui s'excuse s'accuse*, they say, but, in my case, it would be hopeless to attempt the first, and I have surely done enough of the latter to satisfy anybody. At any rate, 'them's my sentiments.'

"Yours truly

"L. R."

"What shocking flippancy in one so young!" said Lady Pell.

"Let him go; it is perhaps as well," remarked the Baronet as he gave the note back to Lisle. "His doing so solves what otherwise might have proved a difficulty to me. I think we have already got from him all the information needful for our purpose, but should we require him at any future time, his note will furnish us with a clue to his whereabouts."

Luigi had stolen out of the house almost like a thief in the night—never to cross its threshold again. So many things had happened and in so short a time, and there was mixed up in them such an element of the inexplicable, that he seemed to have lost control of his thoughts, which kept veering about from one point to another unable to fix themselves on anything for more than a few seconds at a time, and tormenting him now with one question and now with another, to which no answer was forthcoming. Who, or what was the Grey Monk? Were it merely a figment of the brain, an illusion of the senses, would it have had the power, not to speak of the will, to shut the door of the strong room upon him and turn the key? And yet to regard it as a being of flesh and blood was to confront himself with one enigma after another and all equally insoluble. Then again, through what channel had Sir Gilbert made the fatal discovery that he, Luigi Rispani, was not his grandson? Evidently no suspicion of the truth had been in his mind only a few hours before. At dinner on Sunday Sir Gilbert had questioned him about his Continental trip, and had seemed satisfied with his answers. The bubble had burst between ten o'clock on Sunday night and half past ten on Monday morning. Whose was the hand that had wrought the mischief?

It was with a sad heart and reluctant feet that Luigi took his way towards the hotel at Mapleford where his uncle was awaiting him. The Captain had scarcely expected him quite so soon, deeming it likely that he would not see his way to leave the Chase till after luncheon. The door of the sitting-room was open and he heard his nephew asking for him below. "Is it success, or failure?" he asked himself, not without a certain tingling at the nerves, while Luigi was coming upstairs. One glance at the latter's face was enough as he halted on the threshold and met his uncle's gaze. Failure

complete and unmistakable was written on every line of it. The Captain drew a long breath and set his teeth hard for a moment or two. "So," he said with a sort of venomous bitterness as Luigi advanced, "you have come to tell me that you have made a mess of the affair! It is just what I have dreaded all along. I was a fool to let you undertake the job. I ought to have carried it through myself."

"I wish with all my heart that you had. What I have come to tell you is that the game's up!"

"What do you mean?" demanded Verinder, his lips fading to a blue-white.

"Just what I say. We're ruined—there's no other word for it. Everything is known to Sir Gilbert."

"Everything is a big word."

"Not bigger than the occasion warrants. But perhaps you would like to hear how it has all come about."

"I should indeed. But before you begin pour yourself out a thimbleful of that brandy on the sideboard. You look as if the blood in your veins had turned to water."

"Small wonder if it has, as you will say yourself by the time I have told you all."

We need not follow Luigi in his narrative, nor record his uncle's comments thereon. There were several points about it which puzzled the Captain, even as they had puzzled his nephew, and for which he could find no adequate explanation. But that in no wise affected the one overwhelming fact, that his edifice of fraud, notwithstanding all the pains he had been at in the building of it, had crumbled to pieces, struck down by some unseen hand, and he was far from certain yet that it might not involve him personally in the catastrophe.

For the first and all-important question which he asked himself was, as to the steps Sir Gilbert Clare might decide upon taking now that the nefarious plot of which he had been made the victim was laid bare from beginning to end. Would he, while the first flame of his resentment still burned fiercely, cause a warrant to be issued for the arrest of one Augustus Verinder? It was a possibility which might well cause even a man who prided himself on his nerve to shake in his shoes, and if the Captain did not exactly do that, he was certainly rendered excessively uncomfortable thereby. His somewhat cynical philosophy notwithstanding, the prospect of two or three years' incarceration in a gaol, with all its concomitant pains and penalties, was no more alluring to him than it is to the majority of people.

But presently a thought came to him from which he did not fail to d rive a certain measure of comfort. It would be next to impossible for Sir Gilbert to institute proceedings against him without including his daughter-in-law in the indictment as an accomplice, and one almost equally guilty with himself. Now it seemed to him that the Baronet would think twice before taking so extreme a step, seeing

that whatever Giovanna might have been guilty of nothing could alter the fact that she was a member of the Clare family; and that Sir Gilbert would deliberately drag one of his own name through the mire of a prosecution for fraud, seemed, considering the kind of man he was, to be scarcely conceivable.

The Captain had just arrived at this comfortable conclusion when the current of his thoughts was broken by an exclamation from Luigi, who, with his hands deep in his pockets, had been staring disconsolately out of the window for some minutes past.

"If that's not Aunt Giovanna's trunk on the top of a fly which is crawling down the street, I'll eat my hat! Of course it's hers! I can make out her initials on it."

"Then run downstairs; stop the cab and bring your aunt up here," cried the Captain as he started to his feet.

It was indeed Giovanna, back from Italy. She had picked up her maid on her way through London, and on arriving at Mapleford station had hired a cab to convey her to Maylings. But she never got as far as Maylings. The fatal tidings were told her in that room of the *Crown and Cushion* hotel.

She bore the blow very well; but she would feel the effects of it later on far more than at the time. For the present she was simply stunned. She had had much more at stake than either Verinder or her nephew. They had merely lost what had never been theirs to lose. She had forfeited that which, had she not allowed herself to be led away by Verinder's sophistries, would have remained hers through life as an inalienable right—her position as daughter-in-law to the Master of Withington Chase.

But whatever she felt all she said to the Captain was: "I have to thank you for this, Uncle Verinder. If you had let me go to Sir Gilbert, as I wished to do, and tell him the truth—that my child died in infancy—he would not have repulsed me. No, he would have acknowledged me and have made much of me, and at his death I should not have been forgotten. But I listened to you and have lost everything. Oh! I think we are all very rightly punished."

(*To be continued.*)

BIRDS AT DUNLUCE.

By F. A. Fulcher.

A POPULAR guide-book to the Giant's Causeway, speaking of the ancient castle of Dunluce, says: "The only inmates of the venerable pile are now the swallow and the jackdaw."

But the author of this melancholy statement can have been nothing of an ornithologist, or he would most assuredly have seen there many a gay bird; and among them several rarer, and for that reason perhaps, more interesting species that still haunt the precincts of the M'Gwillins' deserted stronghold. In one short visit to the line of coast which the castle commands from its rocky promontory, many birds unknown in more frequented districts greeted us.

On a broad green shelf some twenty or thirty feet above the shallow waste of seething foam that laved the feet of the precipitous cliff stood a pair of choughs. A strong wind was blowing in from the north and chased great masses of cloud across a sunny sky, casting shades of purple and deep blue into the rich green waters of a troubled sea. Up above the rocks were the choughs, their raven feathers unruffled by the wind, standing firm on their beautiful coral-pink feet.

Red legs are the distinguishing mark of the choughs. Each member of the crow family prides itself upon some special feature which the others lack; but the white faces of the rooks, the grey eyes of the ravens, the jackdaws' hoary heads, the dun jackets of the hooded crows, are not either of them so fine a badge as the red legs of the choughs. Here, especially in the land where the "red hand" gained its brave significance, even red claws take precedence.

The choughs were at their usual occupation, peering and pecking in the grass for grubs and worms, tearing up tufts by the roots with their strong beaks, and digging deep into the mud to pull some dainty morsel out of its hiding-place; now probing vigorously, now waiting with their heads bent down and turned sideways as though in the attitude of listening.

Anyone who has watched birds will have observed this posture among the rooks and the crows, the thrushes and blackbirds and other species that find their chief article of food in the small creatures that hide in the roots of thick grass and burrow in the earth.

It may be, as some writers have thought, that they listen for the least sound, and so are guided by the movements of their prey. You might think they were engaged upon most serious geological explorations to watch the solemn way in which they studiously examine the earth's surface; but the one great question upon which the sweet

bird's whole energies are directed is "what shall we eat and what shall we drink?" All the wise looks, all the graceful actions, all the wonderful journeyings that lend such charm and interest to bird-life are subservient to these purely mundane considerations.

The choughs are only looking for worms with that wiseacre demeanour.

In most districts the chough figures nowadays only as a valued specimen in local collections. Once upon a time: say, in the days of Shane O'Neill; that redoubtable chieftain who defeated the Scots near Ballycastle and marched on to Dunluce to seize the castle: choughs were common enough, and probably familiar birds round all the coasts of Great Britain. Now, even in Cornwall, where they lingered long enough to gain the name of Cornish chough or Cornish daw, they are extremely scarce. Not all the glory of Dunluce has faded, though its battlements are fallen and its successive owners one by one have passed away, while the beautiful choughs still, like tradition, linger there.

Dunluce has had many a usurper forced upon it since the time when its native Celtic owners were dispossessed by Scotch and English invaders; but the birds that belong to the spot are faithful still. It remains to be proved for how long this will be the case, and it is only too probable that the increasing numbers of tourists that pass this way to the Giant's Causeway will effectually scare away the birds that watched the raids of M'Gwillins and McDonnells with equanimity.

Magpies abound at Dunluce.

Many of these ominous birds guard the fortunes of peer and peasant on the hills above this strand between Portrush and the Causeway; and many a pair visit the ruined castle, casting auguries no doubt within its historic walls. There is nothing now for the magpies to steal; no glittering rings, for the walls are fallen and the fair ladies that graced these halls have gone elsewhither; no shining spoons and forks, for the banqueting chamber is unroofed, and the knights who feasted there have gone to their long rest. But something attracts the magpies still. Perhaps it is the shelter of the broken walls; or perhaps the store of insects that burrow and grub beneath them. I fancy the magpies' chief fare is found in the wild seeds and berries; they are so constantly in the hedges and among the bushes and brambles that grow low round the cairns of stone on the hill-sides. But there is scarcely a bird of any degree that does not take its share of insects, whatever else it may eat.

A little flock of sea-pies flew off as we drew near. Their name implies no relationship with the foregoing; they belong to very different families; but the broad markings of black and white which have given the trivial name distinguish both.

The sea-pie might be called the sea-plover. Its food consists almost entirely of small shell-fish, sand worms, and all the many marine

insects that abound on a sandy beach ; therefore is its home by the sea. On this Irish coast it is almost exclusively known by its name of sea-pie. In England, where, on many sandy reaches and mud flats near the sea, or on the estuary of a tidal river, these quaint birds abound, they are known as the oyster-catchers. Not that they can by any means catch many oysters, for the oyster-beds mostly lie in deep water where the receding tide does not leave them exposed, and the sea-pies are not swimmers or divers. They are shore birds, and confine their wanderings to sandy reaches and the grassy borderland. Some of their habits are most odd. It is not an uncommon sight in places where they are plentiful, to see them ranged in a long line slowly following the receding tide, their white waistcoats all facing seawards, their black jackets turned upon the land, steadily marching onward as each wave breaks further out, and more wet sand, the treasure-house of such spoil as they love, is left exposed.

The grassy heights of Dunluce are not their habitat. They have merely come up to pay their respects at the old castle which for centuries has stood guard over their own sandy domain that lies to the west of the white rocks, as well as the stony beach below that belongs more strictly to the rock-pipits.

What stories could they not tell, these lonely shores where now only the birds remember all the old legends! How the Vikings used to land upon this stormy coast and strike terror into the hearts of the simple mountaineers as they carried away their most beautiful maidens to far-off Scandinavia. No faint hearts these. And indeed they did win the fairest ladies from out of every nation, as the beauty of their descendants even now testifies.

The birds must remember these wild deeds, for do they not carry tales? Those stormy nights too, when scattered ships of the invincibles were cast here and there upon inhospitable shores, Dunluce and its birds saw something of these, when the castle was armed with canon and culverin from the Spanish ships that were wrecked to the east of the Causeway.

The little rock-pipits abound at Dunluce; their cheerful whistle is heard continually, in and out among the ruins and down on the stone of the beach below. Where the sand ends and the fantastic forms of the white rocks begin to stretch themselves in splendid architecture of vault and archway, the rock-pipit's dwelling-place begins. It stretches for many miles to the eastward, past the Priest's Hole and the Giant's Head, and the many suggestive crags and buttresses into which the beautiful white rocks have been worked and fretted by restless seas waters; past Dunluce; past the wreck-watching reefs of Blackrock and right along the Causeway of old Fin MacCool who piled the rock crystals to make a pathway for his rival to come over the sea.

After the sands of Portrush there are miles and miles of such stony ground as the rock-pipits love. The rocks are reared in solid bastions and lie out in breakwaters ; you would think the rock-pipit's domain

was well guarded against the encroaching forces of wind and wave. But the shifting sands, and the rocks that look impregnable, are but another example of the old story of the oak and the reed. So often, where rocks are, the sea encroaches slowly, working away the strongest cliffs; while the unstable sands, strengthened by their ally, that wonderful land-winning grass sea marram, creep out seaward and gain land from under the waves.

We have examples of this all round our coast.

The flat marshes of Pevensey have gained half a mile since the days of Edward II., when the sea almost washed the walls of the castle that now stands high and dry inland. The same thing has happened on the Romney flats, where the ancient castle of Lympne has receded a mile or more. Such spots as these look as though the next spring-tide would add their grassy meadows to the lost ground of sea bottom.

But here on the rocky parts of the Antrim coast, we have the sea slowly working its way inland, despite the rock fortifications and stony entrenchment that look so resistless. Under the waves lie tracts of bog-land that once upon a time must have stood well in-shore; and Dunluce bears witness to the ravages that have taken place within a few centuries—a few ticks of the clock as geologists count time.

The sea, ever washing and tearing at its foundations, one day broke down a considerable part of the castle, and several persons were killed by the catastrophe. This was in the days when Dunluce was held by other tenants than the birds. Then a home and a stronghold, now but a memento of past joy and glory.

Another marked example of the insecurity of rock defences where the sea is the invader, occurs at Filey, on the Yorkshire coast. Only twenty years ago there was a pathway running round the ancient church of St. Hilda, which is built on the solid rock; now this is so broken away on the seaward side that it is impassable. Another twenty years may see the church undermined.

The birds, however, take no heed of such catastrophes.

What does it matter to creatures with wings if thundering tons of rock come crashing down? They are up and away in safety as quick as thought. Unless indeed misfortune chance to come in spring-time, when the young are tender and helpless in the nest; then, like the Dorks in the burning of Delft, even timid birds will stay and face death rather than forsake their offspring.

The nests of the little rock-pipits are built under the lee of a great stone, or in a crack in a rock, often sheltered beside a cushion of sea pink or a tussock of rough bent, very hard to find, so well is it hidden. The scanty materials of which it is woven are chosen as like as possible to their surroundings; the eggs that lie in the nest are mimetic too; the little bird that sits so patiently almost within the reach of sprinkling sea-spray is dressed in the colours of sea-stones, sea-grasses, and sea-weeds. Like all the pipits this one that

whistles by the sea shows a strong tendency to conform to its environment.

How charming are the birds at such a spot as this, where wild sea-waves and vagrant sea-breezes serve as a fitting setting to the freedom and the *élan* of bird-life!

If there were no longer any other birds than the swallow and the jackdaw, 'twould be joy to watch them here. The grey-headed jackdaws solemn with solitary brooding; the eager swallows that fling themselves to and fro with such grace and with such zest while summer smiles, and one day shoot across the darkling sky and pass away like meteors. But indeed they are not alone.

In the summer there are larks trilling all around, seed-hunting piping in their one high note; starlings, the plaided Scotchmen that play bagpipes and mind the sheep; curlew whistling high overhead lapwings wailing, rooks cawing as they go to meadows from the shore, rock-pigeons cooing like turtle-doves, beautiful white sea-gulls that flash in the sun in dazzling flocks, black ravens few and far between.

This is not one of the most favoured spots, like marsh-lands or the berried copses where wild fruits grow, and where birds abound in number as well as in variety; but yet many come and go, and some are always here.

In the winter when the swallows disappear the redwing's sweet cry is heard in the twilight; and stray pilgrims from the stream of birds wanderers from the far north tarry here awhile in their southern journey. Thrushes, bramblings, tits, siskins, finches, kinglets, robins wrens, passing onward to more wooded and more southern sanctuaries; snow-buntings, larks, plovers, sandpipers, sea-fowl, and water fowl; a few to spend the winter at Dunluce, and myriad hosts bound for other hills and other shores.

Yet the guide-book says: "The only inmates of this venerable pile are now the swallow and the jackdaw." So much for the statements of guide-books; if you receive it it must be *cum grano salis*—put on the birds' tails.

THE LADY OF THE STUDIO.

By W. W. Fenn.

I.

LET us glance at her first as she stands working at the picture on the easel beside a draped lay figure. A woman somewhat on the wrong side of thirty, yet one of those whose beauty evidently until this age had not reached its full maturity. You could see she had probably as a girl been somewhat too angular and spare to have done more than promise perfection. But now that promise was amply, sumptuously fulfilled. The figure, not losing one jot of its slim, lithe grace and fair proportion, had become rounded and finished; the face followed suit, whilst a certain serious earnestness of expression gave it an intelligence most likely wanting in youth. A clear olive complexion, dark brown eyes with wavy hair of similar hue growing low over the broad, intellectual forehead, and worn in unaffected simplicity of style; features sufficiently regular for all save the hypercritical; a small head beautifully set upon the shoulders—these were the points which first struck you when cataloguing the personal attractions of Madeline Marr.

When you came to talk to her, a little closer observation would have disclosed an action of the mouth detracting a trifle from the pleasure of the whole effect. The teeth, though pearly white and even, were too prominent, adding something that now and then looked like cruelty to the lower part of the face. Still the voice was soft, sweet and low; perfect in articulation and wonderfully winning.

As a matter of taste, remembering that it is not yet nine o'clock in the morning, objection perhaps would be taken to the conspicuous diamond star worn in the hair, and to the quantity of rings on the taper fingers; otherwise the whole costume is unexceptionable and highly becoming.

Altogether, the lady presents a most fascinating picture; largely calculated to divert attention from that at which she labours—excellent and attractive though this appears to be—and as one has a right to expect it to be. For had not Madeline Marr dawned upon the artistic world as a professor, an instructress in the noble art of painting? And has she not set up this commodious and elaborate studio at the rear of a small house in St. John's Wood that it may become the leading private school for all ladies desiring to perfect themselves for the profession!

Everybody who knows anything about it, admits that if she can only teach as well as she can paint, she is fully qualified for the post

she now assumes, though nobody quite knows where or how she has acquired her proficiency. Nobody indeed appears quite to know who she is or where she came from (she herself speaks vaguely of Rome and Paris); but then in London, and especially in a neighbourhood teeming with art and artists, people do not stop to inquire too curiously into antecedents. Given a fair amount of talent, one or two introductions to good houses, agreeable manners, a prepossessing personality, and easy means, and nowadays a career is immediately opened for the aspirant to success. And success seemed to have attended Miss Madeline Marr's attempt to establish herself; for although she had only occupied the house and studio for a few months, it had already acquired a fashionable reputation. Her classes were thronged, and she had constant applications from fresh pupils.

As the clock on the bracket above the stove struck nine on this particular morning, the lady looked up at it, and with a gesture of satisfaction said to herself: "Thank goodness—another hour before these tiresome girls will interrupt me." But ere she had done congratulating herself, the gate-bell rang, and she had not cleared the frown from her brow which the sound occasioned, when her neat little maid entered with a card, saying: "A gentleman, ma'am, particularly wishes to see you; he will not keep you five minutes."

Madeline read the name aloud as she glanced at the card—"Mr Fielding Halford, King Edward's Road, N.W." Then she said "Ah, I remember, he asked if he might call early some morning. A tall, white-haired man with a heavy white moustache?" she inquired of the maid.

"Yes, ma'am; a very handsome gentleman with grey hair and blue eyes, as you say, ma'am, and a smooth face except on his lip."

"Yes," pondered Madeline, "that is he. Well, it's very annoying to be interrupted, but I must not refuse to see him—it may lead to business—he knows everybody, they say, though I never met him till the other night. Ask him in, Mary," and as the maid left the studio Madeline resumed her work.

"Too bad, really, to disturb you such a bright morning, but you see I'm a very irregular fellow. I hope you will forgive me, Miss Marr; I want you to do me a favour."

This was the salutation of the gentleman as he strode in and shook hands with her as if they were old friends. Then, with the utmost nonchalance he threw himself into the arm-chair she offered.

He bore out the maid's description to the letter, and as he sat lounging in the easiest of attitudes, his black velvet jacket contrasting admirably with the tone of his complexion and hair, he looked eminently picturesque—as artistic in aspect as he was known to be in mind and character. And Fielding Halford's character was as familiar as a household word in certain circles of the world of art; a man who shone in many brilliant lights. As a painter of all sorts of subjects, in oil or water, with the etching needle, or pencil, he was

accomplished in most phases; and if never absolutely excelling in any, it was merely on account of his vast versatility.

"I work as the fancy takes me," he would say, "and wherever it takes me. Happy-go-lucky is my motto, for I am always happy, and generally lucky."

And if great popularity, hosts of friends, fine health, good looks, freedom from family cares and ties, can contribute to such an end, he was justified in his statement.

"I hadn't the chance of saying much to you, Miss Marr," he presently began, "the other night—not half I wanted; for I have a good deal to say. What a lovely star that is in your hair."

"It was hardly to say that, Mr. Halford, I suppose, that you called," she broke in rather impatiently.

"No, no—not exactly—but I can't help admiring lovely things. The fact is——"

Pausing for a moment he looked very searchingly at her, and leaning forward, continued, "I want you to do me a favour. You have plenty of use for models, no doubt. I want you to employ two young *protégés* of mine—a very beautiful young girl and boy. They are first-rate sitters, and would be capital for some of your classes."

"I shall be very happy to look at them," she answered coldly, "and by-and-by perhaps, but just at present my engagements are made."

"Oh, quite so. But when you can you will give them a turn, won't you? You see, they are of gentle birth, and have fallen with their mother into great distress, and she is an invalid—a widow whose husband was a scamp and went to the dogs—in short—it is—it's a very sad case. I should like to tell you the story."

"I am afraid I can't listen to it now, Mr. Halford," said Madeline, abruptly, glancing at the clock. "I am expecting some pupils directly."

She rose and walked to her painting-table. He also rose, saying:

"Yes, well—I understand—it's a very awkward time perhaps, and I ought to apologise. But I may tell the young pair to call and show themselves, may I not?"

"Certainly," she answered, turning towards him. "And if I find them suitable——"

"Precisely. Thank you very much." Then quite suddenly he added, looking straight into her eyes, "Their name is Hetherege, so you'll know it when you hear it. Good-bye now; I'll take the liberty of calling again soon, if you will allow me. What beautiful pearls those are on your lay figure here, and that diamond cross on the breast. It seems a very valuable brooch."

He was looking at the effigy of a woman in evening dress, and which was adorned on the head, arms, and hands with other appropriate and magnificent specimens of the jeweller's art.

"You are painting from these, I presume," continued Halford after a moment. "Are they your own, may I ask? Please excuse me, but I am a great admirer of precious stones. These are most lovely."

"Yes, they are all my own, I am happy to say," answered Miss Marr, evidently a little conciliated. "I, too, am very fond of jewellery. There is nothing I love so much as painting it, except wearing it."

"You are a very fortunate person—those pearls are priceless—I think you had them on the other night, if I am not mistaken. I noticed them at the time. Presents, of course?" added Halford, turning to her again, and then again to the lay figure.

"Yes," she said, slowly, "nearly all have been given to me from time to time. People soon learn my weakness, and are very kind."

"No wonder," he said; "who would not be kind to you—who could afford it. I mean in this way. I am sure there is no one who could display such gems to greater advantage. Ah, it makes me envious of wealth. Dear me, I only wish I were rich—but no matter."

She smiled graciously now as she said:

"Ah, yes, there is nothing to be done in this world without money I am horridly mercenary. I mean to make all the money I can while I am young. I shall hoard and save every penny and spend it in jewels, so that when I am old I may at least enjoy looking at them—it's quite a mania of mine. Do you really care for them, Mr. Halford It's quite delightful to find a man sympathetic on this point; very few care for jewellery, I fancy."

"Indeed, I would back my love for it against yours. I daresay you have a fine collection, from what you say."

"I don't know about that, but I have a few more pretty things. I should like to show them to you if you really care to see them—but I'm afraid I haven't time now; it's nearly ten o'clock."

"No, no, I must be off. I must not trespass longer. I'll call some afternoon. But stay," he added, "aren't you afraid of being robbed. You don't keep all these precious things here, do you! St. John's Wood is a terrible place for burglaries, and if it got abroad that you kept all these valuable——"

"Ah! I take good precautions, be sure. See here!" and she walked to a corner of the studio, and, with the boastful incaution of a vain woman, pointed to the door of a small iron safe let into the wall and cunningly concealed by drapery. "That is my bank. I am constantly wanting the jewels to paint from, and to wear, and am obliged to keep them handy."

"To be sure," said Halford, "that makes it all right. Still it does seem a little risky—but farewell. A thousand apologies. I will send the young Hethereges over, and call again to hear their fate." And he was gone.

II.

Once out in the warm May sunshine, Fielding Halford gave vent aloud to some strong expressions. There were but few passers-by to hear him as he swung along the St. John's Wood Road toward the Regent's Park, but it will assist us if we listen for a moment to his exclamations and cogitations.

"Confound the woman; how handsome she is! Much altered for the better though, in looks, but I suspect in nothing else. There's no doubt about her; I could swear to her anywhere now, in spite of her new name. I thought I wasn't mistaken from the glimpse I caught the other night. Besides, she positively started when I sprang the name of Hetherege upon her. But stop, let me note down some of her spoils before I forget," and arresting his walk suddenly, Halford took a book from his pocket and began to write. Murmuring to himself as he did so, he finished with the words, "Recognised ruby heart with diamond pendant, many rings quite familiar, and I shan't forget those pearls."

As he shut the book and continued his walk he exclaimed:

"Oh, woman, woman, thy name is vanity; and this won't be the first time the sin has been your undoing! She hasn't recognised me in the least! It's nearly fifteen years though since we met that once, and besides, I have altered out of all knowledge. Hardly anyone would discover in this grey-haired, smooth-faced old gentleman, the brown-bearded *gauche* young stripling of those days. This comes of knocking about the world; but I don't mind," and he pulled himself upright with a very self-satisfied air, as if to say, "Why should I?"

A most distinguished-looking man was Fielding Halford, and now, at any rate, not likely to be forgotten, as the glances of many a pair of bright eyes testified.

Not many days elapsed ere Miss Marr received another visit from him, and then another and another in quick succession. Thus it appeared they were fast becoming great friends. By degrees confidences were exchanged. The conversation became varied; but somehow it always drifted back to jewellery. The whole of the lady's hoard was displayed, exciting the gentleman's keenest admiration. She was inclined to be better friends with him on this topic than that of his young models. She made it plain to him they did not suit her. They had a too homely, rustic look about them, she said; her pupils wanted more refined sitters; their taste and hers led them to study by preference the pictorial side of everyday good society.

When at length Fielding Halford appealed to her charity in the matter, she, vulgarly speaking, shut him up, and declared she couldn't debase art by making it a philanthropic institution. She refused also to listen to their story. She would never have a moment's peace if

she attended to every tale of distress. Would she then kindly contribute to the little fund he was endeavouring to get up for their benefit? No, she made it a rule never to do that sort of thing—that was for people who hadn't to earn their own living. In a word, the gentleman found her tone so unpleasant on this point, that he had the wit soon to drop it, and thenceforth spoke of nothing but pictures and painting, the ethics of art, poetry, music, the tittle-tattle of society, and, above all, precious gems. He also looked at, and flatteringly criticised her work, and paid her a host of compliments in the off-hand, airy manner which distinguished him.

One day he told her he was soon going to South America as special artist for an illustrated newspaper.

"I have travelled all over the globe," he said, "in this capacity. It suits me better than any other, and so now I'm off again."

When he bade Miss Marr "good-bye," she expressed a wish to hear of his welfare, and he promised "to spin her a yarn" from the wilds of the South Seas, if she would really like a letter. "Heaven knows," he added, "how long I shall be away—possibly for years—one never knows"—and these were his last words. Meanwhile the London season had drawn to a close. Very few people were left in town: St. John's Wood became a wilderness. Miss Madeline Marr's season for her classes ended, and she also had left London.

III.

Now had the lady of the studio chanced to remain in town til the end of August, and had she chanced to have been abroad in he own neighbourhood one evening early in September, she might hav accidentally met a person very much resembling Fielding Halford He was leisurely strolling with a cigar, down the narrow little lan which skirted the garden at the back of her house. The day ha been hot and sultry, and the evening was no less so. Not a breat of air stirred the already "sere and yellow leaves" of the trees in th suburban *pleasaunces*. A heavy mist had risen from the low lan about Maida Vale, and by nine o'clock was spreading itself, i conjunction with smoke, over the whole district. Thick and clamm became the atmosphere. The shades of evening lent their aid i making up the general obscurity. The gas lamps, fewer and farthe between in the less frequented parts of St. John's Wood, flickere dimly, and did little more than make the darkness visible. Fe people were abroad, and not a soul immediately near Miss Marr residence—except that one figure so much resembling Mr. Fieldin Halford—and, the humble chronicler of this romance. Indeed, as was, I scarcely recognised him, and could not even now swear that was the man, after all. There is, however, every reason to suppos nobody did notice him but myself, and it is difficult even for me t

do more than surmise, by the light of subsequent events, that he was there. What became of him, where or how he disappeared after turning down the aforesaid narrow lane, it is beyond my power to tell. In fact, his presence at all on the spot might be disputed, inasmuch as his most intimate friends believed he had sailed for South America ten days before. Be this as it may, no direct news came to hand from him for months afterwards, save through the consignments of tropical drawings for his newspaper, bearing certain South American postmarks. Nor was it extraordinary that they were unaccompanied by more than a few lines of writing to the Editor, signed with his initials. He held a roving commission, to go whithersoever he pleased in the southern seas, and to forward such graphic records from time to time as the conditions allowed; he was a special artist, not a special correspondent.

Hence I can assert that from the day he took leave of Madeline Marr, Fielding Halford utterly disappeared from the public eye and ken—disappeared as entirely as it is possible for a man to do in these days of facile communication between the ends of the earth.

IV.

On the outskirts of Kentish Town, in two rooms little better than garrets, meanly and poorly furnished, dwelt the mother and her two children—the *protégés*, as he called them, of our kindly Bohemian. The hint he gave us in his conversation with Miss Marr of their miserable condition was well warranted by appearances. The means by which the boy and girl strove to add to their scanty resources have also been suggested by Halford's words. Through him the young Hethereges had managed to get a few sittings as artists' models, but at the best their own efforts and his were doing little more than keeping them out of the workhouse. And now that the painters had nearly all gone out of town, things had come to their worst. When they do, however, it is said they mend, and happily the present case was no exception to the rule.

A very few days after that hot and sultry evening which had shrouded St. John's Wood in an autumnal mist, a rather unusual thing happened—the post brought Mrs. Hetherege a letter. And more unusual still, a letter containing money—no less than a crisp £10 Bank of England note. The direction on the envelope was in an obviously feigned hand, as were also the words written on the sheet of note paper encompassing the precious article, "From a friend." Thus the recipient was left in the dark as to who could be the sender, for not another scratch of the pen could be found, and the postmark was too blurred for even the date to be deciphered. Astonishment, gratification, gratitude, intense bewilderment, endless speculations—all these emotions were expressed rapidly, incoherently,

by the trio, as they sat over the meagrest of meals ever honoured by the name of dinner.

"It must be dear, good Mr. Halford," timidly exclaimed the girl.

"Oh! no, my dear child," said the mother. "Mr. Halford would not go such a roundabout way to do us this service, he is too frank and open; besides, it is too large a sum. He could not afford to make us such a present: for though he is said to earn a good deal of money, he seldom has any; he is far too careless about it, and when he has helped us before, it has only been by a very little at a time."

"Well, it is not his friend, Miss Marr," broke in the boy with a sardonic chuckle. "I'll bet sixpence of that at any rate. No, I should say it's Mr. Melbury, the R.A., to whom we sat those two or three weeks in June."

"Yes," added the girl, "I agree with you, George, now I come to think of it, for he was very kind and generous, and I remember he asked a great deal about you, mother, and always hoped you were better. Of course he kept our address, as all the artists do."

"Except Miss Marr," broke in the boy with another chuckle. "I saw her tear up our card without looking at it. Why, yes, there's nothing in Mr. Melbury having our address; but perhaps he has just sold the picture he was painting of us sitting on the stile watching the gipsies in the lane—it's Mr. Melbury, I'm sure."

"I don't know what to think, or who to guess—I can't think," said the mother; "my heart is too full. I hope I feel it is God's goodness to us that has done this, and then it is no matter who——" But, bursting into tears, the poor woman could not finish her sentence, and sank back on the hard, worn, horse-hair sofa where most of her days were spent. Weak, sorrowful, and ill as she looked, she still bore the traces of exceeding beauty, and the neatness and care bestowed upon her threadbare attire showed plainly the refinement and habits of better days.

The girl bore a strong resemblance to her mother, and seemed equally well-bred and gentle, notwithstanding the traces of household drudgery clinging to her.

"Mother—mother darling, don't give way now," she said, rising from her chair, and then kneeling down by the sofa. "Dry your eyes, dear; this kind gift will enable you to have many little comforts you need. You must look bright and happy. George and I can go and market to some purpose."

"Yes, mother, it's come just in the nick of time, and it doesn't matter twopence who sent it as long as we've got it," echoed her son, also bending over the sofa and patting the wan cheek.

Before Christmas repetitions of this scene had occurred many times, each under more and more favourable conditions; for further sums, everyone larger than the preceding, had been forwarded to Mrs. Hetherege anonymously through the post. On one occasion

letter accompanying the gift suggested that it should be utilised in finishing the education of the two young people, and recommended the mother to remove to some quiet seaside watering-place, where this could be managed advantageously. Finally, by the following spring, the recommendation was adopted. Mrs. Hetherege, to her intense amazement, found herself in a position to open a small banking-account. In the course of two years, and by the time boy and girl were growing capable of undertaking responsible work, the little family was restored to comfort, if not the luxuries of life. But how or by whom the beneficent change had been wrought remained as great a mystery to them as it was on the arrival of the first £10 note.

Yes, and a mystery it remains, for I cannot pretend to clear it up. All that seems to have any bearing on it shall now be given; but whether it will lead to any reliable conclusion it is for others to determine.

The following letter from Mr. Fielding Halford has come into my hands; but unluckily it is pretty certain that Miss Marr, to whom it is addressed, never received it, for about the time it was supposed to have reached her St. John's Wood studio she had removed, and she has not since been heard of in those circles in which she, her talents, and her diamonds, shone for a while with exceeding brilliancy. Fortune had not continued to smile upon her school of art. She fell ill, it was said, in consequence of some great shock she had received, and which had crushed her spirit; but very little seemed known about it. I believe a paragraph alluding to it did appear in a newspaper at the time, but I missed it. She evidently desired to hush the matter up; but, whatever it was, there is little doubt that to it was due her retirement from the scene of her temporary success. It is thought she went abroad. At any rate she vanished much as she had come, and as personally she does not appear again on the stage of this little comedy-drama, the curtain must fall on it when the following letter from Halford to Miss Marr has been read. It appears to have been written about two years after he was last seen in England, and is dated from "Maracaibo, Republic of Venezuela, South America."

"You will have thought, dear Miss Marr, that I must have forgotten my promise to send you a screed. It is not quite so—nothing but indolence, on my word, and perhaps I should not have been stirred to the effort even now, but for my recently coming across a London newspaper of antique date containing an account of the terrible loss you have sustained. Forgive me, however, if I say it does not surprise me. You will remember I warned you of the danger of keeping such a mass of valuable jewellery under your roof, and lo, it seems my warning was justified! Believe me, you have my sincerest sympathy. I know not what to say by way of consolation.

One thing only occurs to me in that direction, and, mere coincidence though it may be, I fancy it should have the effect on a heart like yours of softening the blow which fate, in the shape of a burglar, has dealt you.

"Within little more than a week of the time when your studio was broken into, and a large quantity of your precious treasures stolen, the fortunes of those poor people the Hethereges, in whom, you will remember, I was so deeply interested, entirely recovered. You never would let me tell you their story. It should interest *you* now more than anything that has happened to me since we parted, so I will tell it to you straight away. Some years ago, we won't say how many, I was in Manchester, and there had the privilege of making the acquaintance of a great scamp named Hetherege. He was the junior partner in a large mercantile house, and the only redeeming point in his character was his love of art. He practised it, too, himself not inefficiently—in a word, he was a very skilled amateur. He studied diligently at a private life school—and so on, and moreover, what was still more creditable in him, bought pictures largely (bought one of me), for he had lately, at his father's death, been supposed to inherit a big fortune. Now amongst the students at that life school was a certain very beautiful and accomplished Miss Maynard, aged seventeen, at whom Mr. Hetherege seems to have cast what are called 'sheep's eyes,' although he was a married man with two infant children—boy and girl. He kept this fact from Miss Maynard, but she was cunning enough to find it out, although she did not tell him she had done so. His infatuation for her increased, and by degrees it went so far that it led him to ask her to accompany him to India, whither his business was soon to take him. But the maiden naturally would not listen to such a proposal. As a cat plays with a mouse ere devouring it, so she played with her helpless victim. She was a canny Yorkshire lass, very fond of money, and, moreover, about as heartless and unscrupulous a young person, for her years, as you may find. She utilised the strong hold she had of him to fill her purse. He neglected and impoverished his home by squandering large sums of money on her, and making her magnificent presents of valuable jewellery (for which she had a fantastic fondness—I have seen some of it) all in the hope of eventually inducing her to elope with him. Had he not been blinded by his mad and reprehensible love, doubtless he would have read her better, and have seen that the more she got out of him, the less did she mean to fall into his views. Maddened at last by her resistance, he actually asked her to become his wife, and she, notwithstanding that she knew the illegality of such a step, finally consented—seeing by such a consent a means of further bleeding his pocket. Of course the engagement was kept a profound secret, and I happened to know that she even induced him to make arrangements for their marriage at a registry office at Birkenhead on the eve of his departure. How the business would have

ended no one can say, had not fate, Nemesis, call it what you like, stepped in. A day or two before the crisis would have been reached, Hetherege was about to cross the Mersey to Birkenhead, in order to carry out their plans, when he managed to miss his footing on the gangway to the ferry-boat, and falling into the river, was incontinently drowned—then and there. Miss Maynard was not inconsolable as you will imagine. Within a couple of months she left Manchester, and what became of her, and the jewellery, and the wealth she had acquired in that prosperous city—I have only a shrewd suspicion. I believe later on she was seen in Paris and Rome, and, strange as it may appear, a rumour has reached me in these remote wilds that she turned up for a brief period in London in her artistic capacity—about two years since—in fact shortly before I left.

"But to go back to Manchester. Soon after the death of Hetherege by drowning, the house in which he was a partner failed disastrously, bringing ruin upon scores of people, and naturally unutterable ruin on the unfortunate widow and children of this misguided and infatuated young man.

"However, I repeat, after much suffering and privation they have been restored to comparative prosperity, and I know no one who should feel greater satisfaction at the curious coincidental circumstance than Miss Madeline Marr!"

This letter from Fielding Halford to "the lady of the studio" then refers briefly to his enjoyment of the tropics, and the work he is doing, and finishes with the declaration that in all probability he shall end his days among the South Sea Islanders.

As far as I know he is still out there, but why he should have taken the trouble to write to Miss Marr, and what his purpose might have been in loitering close to her house that foggy autumn evening, when he was supposed to have gone abroad—well, to use his own expression, I have only "a shrewd suspicion." For his sake I abstain from putting that suspicion into words, for of course it must always remain a question how far we are justified in doing a wrong in order that we may right a wrong. It is to be regretted, perhaps, that the letter has fallen into my hands instead of hers, but as she has, in Post-office phraseology, "gone away; left no address," and cannot, consequently, be found, I have only hereby faithfully to promise to deliver it to her, should I ever have the pleasure of meeting her again.

LETTERS FROM SOUTH AFRICA.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "In the Lotus Land," etc., etc.

Johannesburg. *May*, 1893.

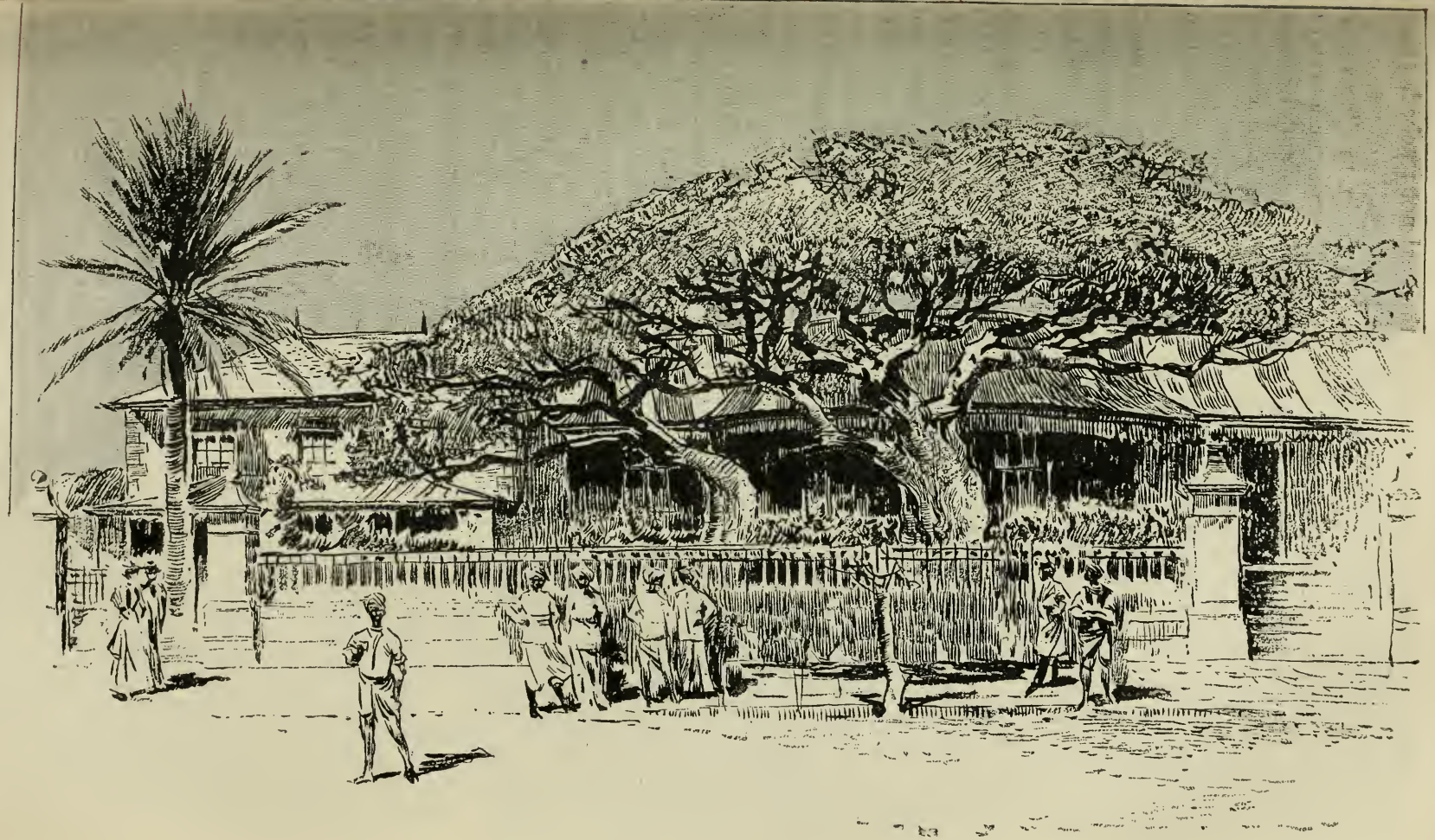
CARE AMICE,—Searching for one thing, means often finding another, and many of the world's great discoveries have been less accidental than consecutive: line upon line; here a little and there a little.

So with the Cape. Whilst seeking a new route to India this great continent was seen for the first time, and white men first placed foot upon it, four centuries ago. The honour was due to Portugal, for Spain and Portugal were then amongst the foremost, most energetic, and most enterprising of civilised countries. How are the mighty fallen, may be said of them to-day: as it has been said and will be said of all great countries in their turn. But the territory acquired by Portugal so long ago, she still owns.

In those remote middle ages men were strong to work and to suffer; they were undaunted by great perils and accomplished great results. Trade was their sheet-anchor of prosperity, but it was trading under difficulties. Not then, as now, could they run to and fro upon the earth and flash messages from east to west in a moment of time. Much trading with the rich and gorgeous products of India—the gold and frankincense and myrrh of the East—entered largely into the balance-sheets of the great merchants of Europe; but a journey to India meant labour and time and peril. The terrors of the Red Sea had to be braved; whilst long journeys in caravans across the deserts of Asia, to the frequent loss of life, often edged the debit side of the ledger with a deep black border.

The trade with India had chiefly contributed to the wealth and prosperity of the great Republics of Venice and Genoa, who ruled the world of commerce no less than the world of beauty. This excited a desire for fewer risks and greater profits, and many expeditions went forth in search of a sea route.

The Portuguese were successful. To-day they have degenerated into the least intellectual, the most insignificant of nations, but in those days they were strong to do and dare. It was about this time that the mariner's compass was invented, and there was something more to steer by than the "wandering stars of Heaven." Diaz was the first to sail round into the unknown waters beyond the Cape: yet the land of the Cape he did not see. But he was on the fair way to India and would have reached it with his little vessels, had not his men, daunted by storms, mutinied, and insisted upon returning.



ROYAL HOTEL, DURBAN.

So back they went, the way discovered, the goal not reached. Not for them India's coral strands by way of the sea.

Six years later Columbus was sent out by Spain to discover a western route to the Spice Islands; those small oases in a watery setting, of which we dream that the air is ever scented and birds of rainbow plumage flash in the sunlight. He did more than discover the Fragrant Islands, for we know that he found America, and so perhaps conferred a greater favour upon Spain even than if he had established the sea route to the Indies.

This victory was reserved for Vasco da Gama, who, eleven years after Diaz, followed in his footsteps. But better manned, he was able to control his sailors and put down mutiny—for again they mutinied—and for him all ended well.

His fleet consisted of three very small vessels and a store ship, and with a crew of 160 men he left Lisbon on July 8, 1497. The whole population turned out to witness the departure and breathe prayers for success, headed by King and Church. With great pomp and ceremony the priests blessed the vessels, and the King unfurling the Portuguese Standard, bade Vasco da Gama plant it upon a new country. Amidst the harmony of anthem and the murmur of benediction the little squadron set sail.

One direction given by the King of Portugal to Vasco da Gama was to search for Prester John and the King of Calicut. A European legend of long standing, firmly believed in by the lovers of magic and marvel—and their name was legion—affirmed that a Christian king named Prester John was monarch of a vast kingdom which, once placed in the centre of Asia, had now been transferred to the sunny lands of Eastern Africa.

All the wealth, gorgeousness and possibilities of the 'Arabian Nights' did not equal the resources of Prester John and his kingdom.

There were underground streams whose sands and banks were flashing gems. Ants dug for gold and threw it up in mountainous heaps. The Salamander, whose atmosphere was fire, here had his abode. Pebbles gave sight to the blind, and conferred the useful power of invisibility to those who carried them. Prester John by the aid of a magic mirror, could see everything that was happening in the length and breadth of his dominions: it may be fairly doubted whether its possession conferred happiness upon him, unless he employed it sparingly, and refused to believe in a great deal that he saw. He went to battle with thirteen standards which consisted of crosses of gold and jewels: each cross followed by 10,000 knights and 100,000 men. This Eastern king was a Christian; and the King of Portugal, himself a Christian, believed that he had more than a legendary existence.

Vasco da Gama found Calicut but without its wonders, and Prester John himself remained an undiscovered mystery.

Yet are not many of these fabled wonders of the 12th century actual facts in the 19th? Do not the rivers of South Africa actually

run in jewelled streams? Are not human ants throwing up gold in mountainous heaps? And will not all this confer magic and bring forth results quite equal to stones that heal the sick and bestow invisibility on their owners? After all, the gorgeous imagination of the Eastern people was only an exaggeration of possibilities. Many of them have come to pass.

One hundred and seventy days after leaving Lisbon—on Christmas Day—Vasco da Gama landed on the Bluff of Natal, which stands out boldly, as it stood then, guarding the entrance to its natural harbour. After planting his standard upon the unknown shores he set sail again for India, and finding at Melinda an Indian pilot who steered him safely across the Indian Ocean, he reached Calicut on the 20th May, 1498, and the sea route to India was established.

Can we now imagine a journey of 170 days from Lisbon to Natal?

Absorbing and romantic to a degree is the history of Southern and Eastern Africa, if only we had space for the narrative. Interesting its connection with Europe, and with European times at their most enchanting period.

Spain and Portugal in consequence of these discoveries became practically masters of the rich and glorious Eastern trade until the close of the 16th century. They were also masters of the seas. Only Spanish and Portuguese traders were recognised by the Eastern merchants, who looked with more than suspicion upon all others, and only vessels bearing these standards were safe from attack. Then and later began the great days of piracies: those highwaymen of the seas more dreaded than anything ever dreamed of or encountered on land. Long was their reign, unlimited their list of captures, fabulous their booty.

But those days and terrors have passed away for ever. A new order reigns. The pirates and highwaymen are now respectably clothed and walk in daylight, and do their work by Acts of Paliament; and their motto:

> "That he should take who hath the power,
> And he should keep who can."

It is only a new reading of an old story; arriving at given ends by different means. Yet is it more serious and deep-rooted.

But we must abandon our romantic history, round which our pen would fain linger long, to pursue our more legitimate task of making our way through the country. We have not to do with the past of South Africa, but with the present; with the country that though yet in its infancy, is building itself up into wealth and greatness and a glorious future.

As we have said, we have not yet seen any place in South Africa to equal Durban in pleasantness or beauty of situation. The whole province is more or less fertile and productive. In the neighbourhood of Durban are large tea and sugar plantations, well worth visiting. The sugar-cane grows to a great height, making the black men, in their turbans and scant drapery, look diminutive and insigni-

ficant. The cane grows stiff and straight, but the leaves wave and rustle pleasantly in the wind.

The tea plantations give a very opposite impression. The bushes are low and outspread, and the leaves change in colour, from light to dark, according to their age. The process of picking and preparing is interesting to go through, and the tea of freshly-grown leaves would almost rival the artistic coffee that was wont to send its perfume through those magic rooms of Cairo in the happy days that already begin to seem distant. Alas, for the ever-rolling stream of time!

We were sorry to leave Durban. Perhaps it was well that we had no choice in the matter, or we might have spent most of our time here, content with the dreamy effect it produced. As it was, when the hour struck, it found us equipped for travel. Our host politely regretted the shortness of our stay, and hoped we should return—a hope probably never to be fulfilled.

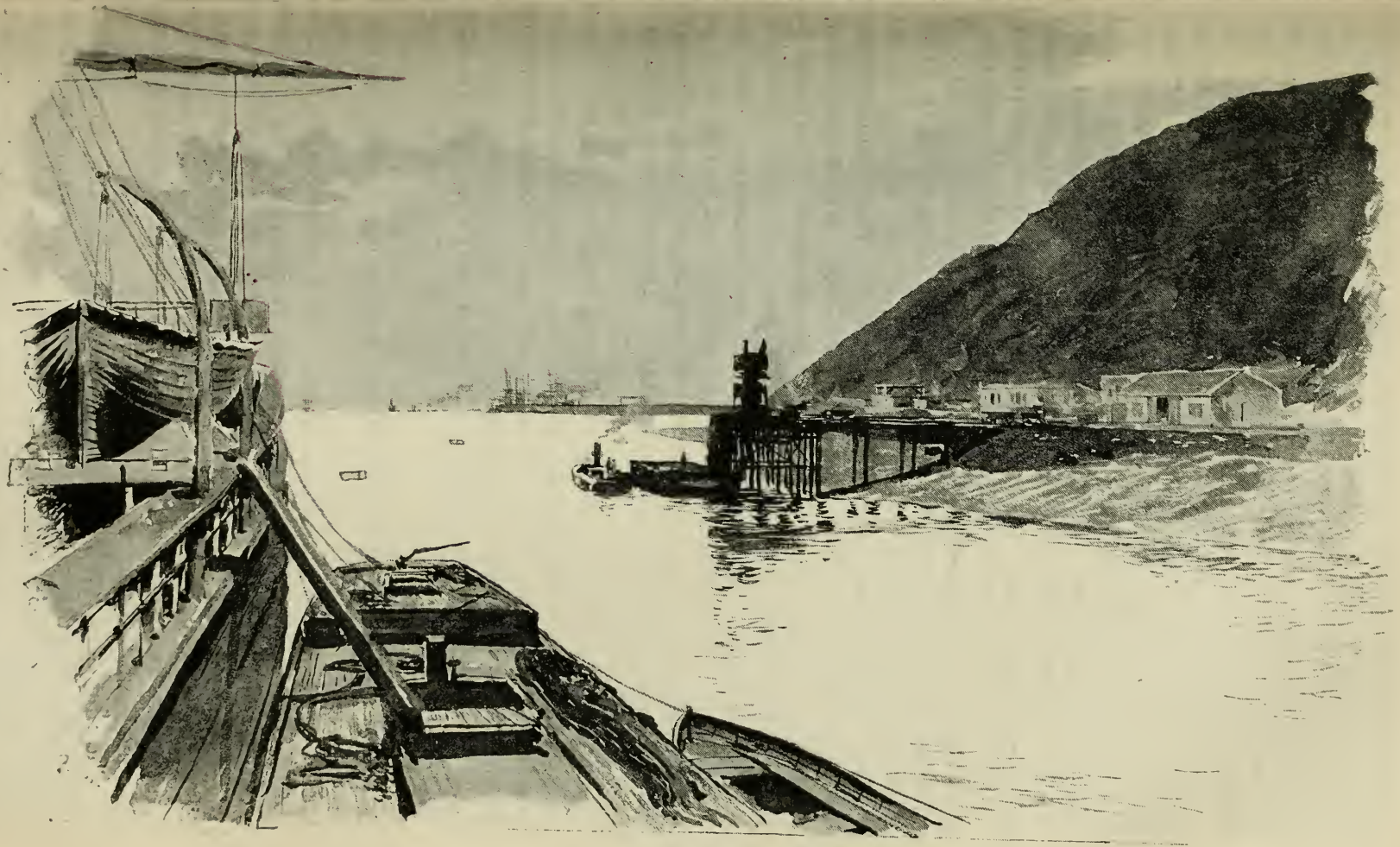
As the station was near at hand, we walked to it. Half a dozen coolies went before us. One carried a stick, one an umbrella, one the inevitable cushion necessary to travelling in South Africa—not to make oneself comfortable, but to make misery a little less evident. The procession of coolies was amusing; and amusing was it to see their consultation over the gratuity received; grave and important as if it were a budget on which the fate of a Government depended.

There was another regret in leaving Durban—we had to do so in the evening; and as the scenery between Durban and Pietermaritzburg is some of the finest in South Africa, it was a matter upon which H. and I condoled with each other. Yet is it not always so? The "malignant crossness of events" invariably steps in at the most inopportune moment, as though to remind us that in this "vale of tears" we cannot have things all our own way. "Before I come or after I am gone, the roses always bloom."

For a time there was daylight, and the beauty of the landscape was evident.

Rich pastures and orchards, graceful trees and a wealth of flowering shrubs and creepers; tea and sugar plantations; fruit trees in abundance, and farms blessed with a quiet prosperity. Hills rose in undulating outlines clear-cut against the evening sky. The sun went down in a blaze of glory, flooding the heavens with brilliant colours. Rose-clouds, high and feathery, floated in ether. The train jolted over the iron rails; the carriage, the best they had, was hard and uncomfortable. South Africa has not yet reached the days of luxury and self-indulgence, and for many reasons this is well. Such days are seldom times of progress.

At one point of the road—Marienhill—there is a Trappist Monastery, and it certainly seems going far to escape the world. It is only one out of many scattered over the country. This possesses a Kaffir Mission, a convent and schools: a large property of 12,000 acres, much of the land yielding good returns.



DURBAN.

Darkness soon fell after sundown. The twilight of our English skies is not known here. But it was still possible to trace the outlines of the hills against the dark sky, and we easily imagined that we were passing much that was unusually grand and interesting for South Africa, where long stretches of barren, desert-like plains are too frequently the rule.

The distance we had to travel was seventy miles, yet it took us about five hours by the South African Express. At length we steamed into quite a large station, and found ourselves at Pietermaritzburg. It was late, and in spite of the brilliant stars the darkness was intense. Outside, the omnibus of the Imperial Hotel was in waiting—quite an admirable conveyance. This, we thought, promised well for the inn so regally named—only one so often finds these magnificent omnibuses, with plate glass windows and spring cushions and reflecting mirrors, so many traps for the unwary. It happens sometimes that all the poverty of the inn equals all the splendour of the vehicle.

The Imperial omnibus took us under its wing—infinitely more luxurious than the carriage we had just left—and we were soon travelling through the darkness. We could see very little of the place. The roads seemed wide, open and deserted. Here and there we discerned a low house, and many small trees faintly outlined. Everything was steeped in quietness. There was neither sight nor sound of movement; no light gleamed from any window; apparently we had come to a city of the dead. But the primitive inhabitants were only sleeping.

At the hotel we found plenty of life and sound. It looked in the darkness, a long, low, straggling building. Somehow, we did not associate it with Arcady, like the wonderful inn at King Williamstown. It was not surrounded by a blaze of light and strains of unearthly music. No regal hostess addressed us as Your Grace and My Lord, or guided us upwards through mysterious passages to Arcadian bowers.

Yet the passages were straggling and mysterious enough, and never ending.

We passed savoury kitchens, where cooks seemed heating furnaces seven times, and delicious sounds and fumes of fizzing and frying went forth in spite of the lateness of the hour. Our pilot was one of the "young ladies" of the house—a sort of institution peculiar to South Africa, when you are made to feel that it is a gracious condescension to wait upon you, and it is done more as an agreeable pastime than as a matter of duty.

The inn had evidently been added to according to necessity, expanding with the growth of the country. There was an air of quiet prosperity about it, but all of a very homely character that was rather pleasing. Do we not grow weary of the everlasting routine of "fashionable hotels," with their stiff vulgarity and dull restraint?

At last we issued once more into the open air beneath the skies: an uncovered space forming three sides of a quadrangle. From the low buildings gleamed friendly lights which threw their reflections about our path, making the outside darkness more visible. It was all primitive and strange and picturesque. Across the court-yard was a new building; a "dépendance," which resembled nothing so much as a Swiss Châlet; built, as we discovered, of clean, homely, delicious pine wood. The staircase of the upper rooms was outside, and the roof above was slanting and eaved. The illusion was perfect. We looked beyond for the South African Swiss Mountains, and if we did not see them, perhaps that was due to the darkness.

The young "lady-help," applying a magic key to the lock, threw wide the door.

We entered a large apartment, with two beds so far apart that conversation could only be carried on by means of a telephone. This, she explained, was their best room, but if we preferred two very small rooms in a distant part of the establishment, they were unoccupied.

We declared ourselves enchanted with our present quarters: the room was large enough for a constitutional walk, and everything was delightfully fresh and clean. It was only too probable that we should go further and fare worse.

The lady-help bowed herself out with gracious condescension, and presently the most hideous old woman that ever terrified mankind entered with two saucepans of hot water. She apologised for the absence of jugs, which were all in use. Upon explaining that we did not need the luxury of hot water, the vision retired, saucepans and all. Our dreams that night were haunted by an endless crowd of ghouls and demons who pursued us relentlessly with seething cauldrons and flames of fire. The next morning we felt as if we had gone through centuries of purgatory.

It was Sunday morning, and there was a calmness about the place, "a Sabbath stillness in the air, which reminded one of Grahamstown." It must be a quiet place at all times with very little individuality about it: much resembling so many of these South African towns: appealing strongly to any one coming from the noisy, crowded world; for its first impression—and its last—is rest and repose.

Here, the prevailing atmosphere was distinctly urban, sylvan, in spite of a market, a townhall, Government buildings—it is the seat of the Natal Parliament—and some 20,000 inhabitants—more than half of which are Europeans. The streets or roads are wide and long and straight. They look almost like country lanes, for the houses dotted about here and there are low, like bungalows, and half concealed by trees and shrubs. Innumerable rose-hedges, wonderfully beautiful when in full bloom, scent the air with delicious perfume. Life seems to pass as a quiet rustic dream, and the ordinary seventy years

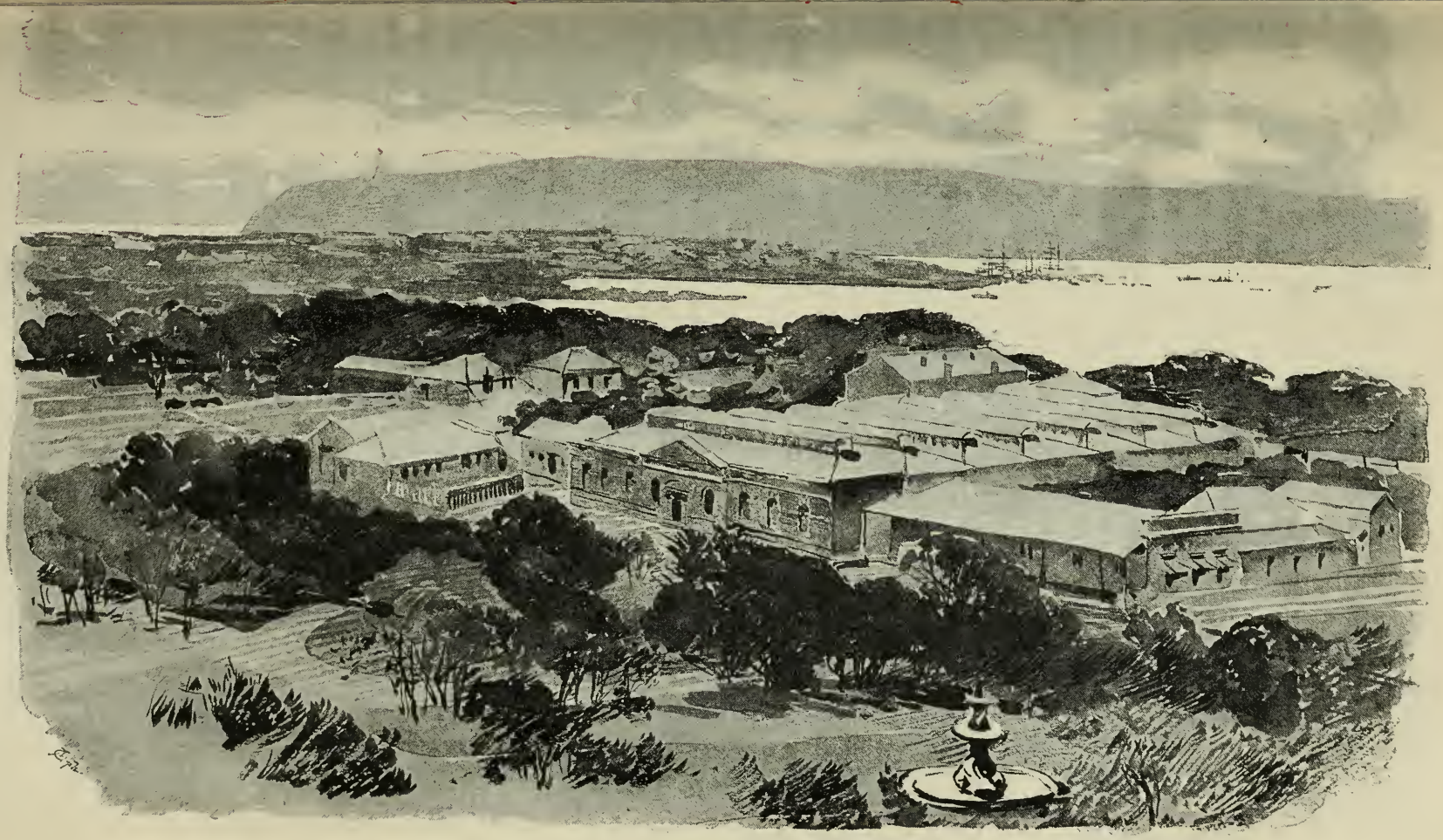
of existence must be long-drawn out as two centuries. This quiet life has much to recommend it.

It was all especially quiet this Sunday morning. As we went up and down the roads, we seemed almost the only inhabitants. No mere form or empty name is the Day of Rest to South Africans. Just now Pietermaritzburg is under a sort of ecclesiastical cloud, for though a Bishopric it has no Bishop: and has not had one for some time. There is schism in the church: a divided party: a High-Church Party, very extreme, presided over by the Dean: and a Low Church Party at the Cathedral (where the Dean is not) waiting its Head, which no doubt will come some day.

The Cathedral is a very small unpretending building, with a very quiet service and an antiquated harmonium. Its chief point of interest is the tomb of Bishop Colenso, within the Communion rails: a plain, flat marble slab, bearing his name. We will pass over the vexed question of his Biblical opinions, and say that personally he was much liked. His influence upon the natives is said to have been unbounded, and he could go single-handed where an army would scarcely venture. The Zulus called him Usobantu, or *Father of the People*. He could not, however, stay that terrible war of which the worthy landlady of the Imperial—a sort of female Admirable Crichton—gave us a graphic description. She had gone through it all.

"It was a terrible time, that dreadful Zulu war," she said to us. "Fears were boundless. A laager or refuge was formed capable of holding 4000 people, but it was never used. Nearly all houses were barricaded, all windows were shuttered. It resembled a plague-stricken city: a city of the dead. Everywhere one heard knocking and hammering—the noise of workmen erecting useless barricades. No one knew in the morning whether he would be alive at night. Many, very many, fled from the town, but we remained. I said to my husband—who was then living: 'We are as safe here as anywhere. If we are fated to be massacred, we shall not save our lives by running away.' So we did not join the flight, which reminded one of the Exodus of the Children of Israel more than anything else. The Zulus came pouring in, but we kept quiet and came to no harm.

"The Prince Imperial—how well I remember it—used to ride a fiery white horse, and day after day would try and break in the vicious animal at the risk of his life. I used to beg of them to tell the Prince to give it up; I went out in the road one day myself and told him; he only laughed and said one of them must be master, and that one must be himself. He was a fine young fellow, handsome, courageous, amiable; everyone liked him; but he was fatally obstinate and self-willed: and alas that self-will, that fearless courage and love of adventure, brought about the terrible catastrophe. Well, it was all to be, and if we cannot see the wisdom of the blow, we may not doubt it. A blow it was. Never shall I forget the last day I ever saw him alive. He went prancing by on his vicious white horse on what was to be his



DURBAN.

last expedition. Already the war had broken out, and anxiety was upon every face. But he seemed to know no fear, no anxiety. I think he could never realise any but the bright side of things. As he passed me, he waved his hand and smiled with that affable manner he always had, and pointed to his charger, of which apparently he was now master; and though I heard no words I felt sure his lips said: 'You see the effect of perseverance!' Yet I much fear it was that same horse that did the harm. They had dismounted, and when they were surprised, the animal was restive and unmanageable: he could not remount. Then later came the awful tidings. 'It is impossible!' I cried, when I first heard them. 'His life would have a special protection.' But it was only too true. The brave young life, so full of hope and promise, had been cut down. It was frightful. I have often wondered how many in England and France wept such tears as mine. And many a cause have I had for weeping since then, for I soon lost my husband and have had to face the world alone. The Sunday after Isandhlwana the churches were draped with black—and, alas, too many of the inhabitants had to put on black also."

She was a pleasant and superior woman, our hostess; there was something very genuine and homely about her; a true ring, which, when heard, one recognises instinctively. We asked about the schism in the Church.

"It is a thousand pities," she said. "We are not strong enough for this division, and it makes everything uncomfortable. What we want is a Bishop who has no extreme views either way, and who would have wisdom and discretion to put things right. But he is long in coming, and when he does come he will have a difficult task to perform."

The quiet service in the Cathedral was soon over and was rather badly attended. Perhaps this was not surprising, for apart from the schism alluded to, Pietermaritzburg seemed full of churches and chapels of every denomination; from the energetic Roman Catholic on the one hand to the aggressive Salvation Army on the other. The latter went through a noisy performance on a large green: the only discordant element in that Sabbath repose. In Church Square there was a sad monument to those who fell in the Zulu war, and it brought back to us vividly all the terrible account of those bygone days. Somehow when on the very spot, one realised it all more keenly and intensely than ever before: all the horrors of war, but especially of war with savages.

The afternoon was too hot and brilliant for walking, and as our hours were limited, our hostess proposed that we should drive: and sent us a comfortable victoria and a capital pair of small, fast, South African horses.

We thus saw much more of the neighbourhood than would otherwise have been possible. The Botanical Gardens are especially beautiful. To the north-west of the town rose a range of hills some

3000 feet high, beautiful in form, one of which is called the Town Hill, its highest point, Zwaartkop. To-day the outlines were free of cloud, and stood out boldly and clearly against the intense blue of the sky.

The town may be said to lie amongst the hills, and though very hot in summer, is declared healthy. Even to-day, when brown autumn was spreading her store, heat and sunshine were intense. It lies over 2000 feet above the level of the sea. The country is productive, and yields maize, oats, corn and potatoes in large quantities. There is a great deal of bush country, from which the trees are cut down to make waggons. Pietermaritzburg is named after two famous Boers, who died in 1838, about the time that it was founded. It was then a barren, treeless waste, but energy and perseverance soon transformed it into a beautiful and productive spot.

Much of the finest scenery lies in this immediate neighbourhood. A leisurely ride or drive of three hours will bring you to the Table Mountain of Natal, formed of sandstone. The spot is one of the loveliest in the province, and of great interest to botanist and geologist. In a deep gorge, close to the mountain, the River Umgeni rushes on its wild course to the sea.

So that Pietermaritzburg is not to be passed over in visiting this new country.

It is even well to make some stay here, and become acquainted with much that is worth seeing and knowing. You soon pass into Zululand and a neighbourhood where the natives are found in great force, and may be closely studied, for they are very accessible. If terrible and savage in war, there is nothing aggressive about them in the piping times of peace. They possess a great deal that is worth cultivating, and it is to be hoped the day may come when they will rank as a civilised people.

As much cannot be said of all the South African natives. The Hottentot and Bushman, for instance, one would like to see die out and disappear. Zululand is already English territory, and the Governor of Natal rules over it; we should try to make the people at least equal to ourselves in the broad outlines of civilisation. No doubt the extreme days of Cetewayo have departed, but they are still savages —though of savages the best.

Again we had to leave in the evening, but this time it was to travel all night. We much regretted it, but time is inexorable as fate. Not for us will the sun stand still. Our destination, as far as the rail was concerned, was Charlestown, the terminus. Here we changed for what they called coach travelling, across country. Coach forsooth! You shall hear.

Our train started at ten o'clock, and for many hours we should be journeying through the darkness, seing outlines and filling in details according to fancy. We were sorry to leave our comfortable inn and landlady, who had none of the lackadaisical airs about her which distinguished her lady-helps. No doubt life had been too serious for

her. "We are all taught of sorrow." We knew not what our next quarters would be like; but for that night at least we should not be "lying in the down."

The train came in from Durban and a good and obliging guard gave us a compartment, and made us up two beds. This is by no means always possible, and we felt ourselves as happy as cows in a clover field. And when we were comfortably anchored and had time to look round, behold we saw our friend the Baroness like another Ophelia, wandering up and down the platform in search of her lost compartment. She had come in from Durban, and espying us at the same moment flew to us as drowning men grasp at a straw.

"I got out for five minutes' rest and recreation," she explained, "and now I cannot find my compartment again. They are all exactly alike. What shall I do? That wicked guard will not help me. Every moment the train may go off."

We sympathised with her from experience. Years ago, the same thing happened to us, but with a much more awful ending.

The scene was France; the occasion the night-express travelling southwards to the lovely Riviera. We had got out at Dijon to the sound of the midnight chimes from the neighbouring Cathedral. Like many others, we wished to refresh ourselves with the coffee or bouillon always waiting at the *buffet*. It was an intensely dark night, and chilly. Could we find our compartment in returning think you? Not in the least. Doors were closed, blinds were drawn.

It was a frightful moment. The train was almost in motion. The impatient guard shouted "En voiture, monsieur!" until in a fit of temporary insanity he lifted me bodily in his strong arms, opened the first door he came to, and shot me in as an arrow from a bow. Four old maids, wigless and toothless, comfortably "arranged" for the night, occupied the four corners of the carriage. Four pairs of eyes glared at me, as eyes have only glared in dreams. There was a sound of teeth chattering: they could only be my own, and the cause was fright. The ladies could not speak, fortunately.

Imagine my feelings. I lost consciousness from terror. I can just remember hurling anathemas at that dreadful guard, and then everything was a blank. When I returned to the world four figures had wrapped themselves round beyond recognition. Their faces were concealed, and they looked for all the world like those dreadful brothers of the Misericordia one sees going about the streets of Florence and other cities of Italy; hideous and deathlike; draped faces with nothing visible excepting two piercing eyes glaring at you through round holes in the cloth.

I neither moved nor stirred; I dared not for my life; I suffered the tortures of the Inquisition from cramp; I could have screamed with agony; but those eight eyes held me spell-bound and fascinated. I believe that if I had only blinked an eye, eight claw-like hands, forty vengeful talons, would have clutched at my throat. I felt as those do

Berea, Durban.

who are pursued by a ghoul, on whom a vampire has fastened. When the train stopped at Lyons, I looked ten years older; the guard thought I was my elder brother; many grey hairs had appeared. I went up to him and fairly shook the author of this unspeakable disaster. "Misérable!" I cried. "If I do not live to be seventy it is thanks to your perfidious conduct!"

"Mais m'sieu," he replied in a southern patois, and twisted phraseology, "c'est tou-te la faute à vous. Moi, pauv' gars, z'ai fait pour le mieux."

And so remembering all this, we took compassion upon the Baroness. We even feared the situation might become a repetition of that fearful night—transposed. The guard was forcibly impounded, the right carriage was found at last, and Madame la Baronne smiled benignly as she prepared to make herself comfortable, and dismissed us with a wish for pleasant dreams.

The night passed, and then came that chilly moment when dawn faintly breaks in the East. It gradually spread; the sky went through all its glorious changes, and then the sun shot up, a round, red, majestic orb. We felt that we were getting more "up country;" more into the interior; farther away from civilisation. Presently we should find ourselves amongst the savages, perhaps have to sleep in a kraal. Who knows what is in store for them when they passed into the unexplored?

The country was very wild and beautiful; far reaching plains; green but barren hills rising against the clear sky. A great deal of the land was rich and fertile, and many farms were dotted about. Exquisite undulations, endless sweeps, gave their charm to the landscape whilst every now and then the train laboured up a steep ascent, and we looked down into deep and sheltered valleys, grain-bearing, rich in pasture land and fruit orchards. The cattle grazed in the plains.

We were somewhere near Ladysmith when daylight restored the world to us.

If we could have done the right thing, we should have left the train here, and gone across country, over the Drakensberg Range through the Van Reenan pass, into the Orange Free State, landing at Harrismith. By this means we should have become familiar with some of the finest scenery in South Africa, passing innumerable and interesting Kaffir kraals on our way. There is now a railroad to Harrismith, but it is better still to keep to the old coach road, when time is not an object.

At Ladysmith we were rising in the world, for it lies over 3000 feet above the level of the sea. The climate is dry and bracing, but very hot in summer. Here come many invalids, suffering from consumption and bronchitis, anxious to lengthen their pilgrimage through the true "vale of woe." The morning was growing quite old when we reached Glencoe, which is very near to the Dundee Coal-fields. We really might have been in Scotland. The surrounding neighbourhood is rich in iron also, and perhaps is destined to become the Black

Country—that terrible spot—of South Africa: or at least of Natal: for each province is large enough to have its own Black-Country quarters.

When we reached Dundee we were within twenty miles of Rorke's Drift, so gallantly defended by a handful of Englishmen against 4000 Zulus on the 22nd January, 1879. It was the fatal day of the Battle of Isandhlwana, when about 2000 English and native troops under Durnford and Pulleine were met by 24,000 Zulus. Only about 40 escaped, and the loss on the side of the Zulus was incalculable. The mountain of Isandhlwana lies very near to Rorke's Drift. Have you forgotten the story? We need to build a new Valhalla, and it should be written in letters of gold above its portal.

It was after Isandhlwana. The English camp was at the Drift and 4000 of the enemy, fired with victory, marched away to take possession. They crossed the Buffalo River four miles below the drift. Lieutenant Chard was in command of the camp. In the afternoon two men appeared on the opposite side, and when brought across, they told of the day's disaster, and also that Zulus in great force were marching upon Rorke's Drift.

The camp consisted of nothing but a thatched cottage and outhouses. Lieutenants Chard and Bromhead, and Mr. Dalton, a Commissariat officer, proceeded to make the best defence they could. They barricaded the hospital, using all the waggons and bags of corn for protection. A wall of biscuit boxes was built up, but it was frail and insufficient; the supply failed. Towards five o'clock in the afternoon 600 Zulus came in sight, and bore down upon the impromptu barricades. Until midnight assault after assault was made by the Zulus, and successfully repulsed by the brave little garrison. At four in the morning of the 23rd the Zulus retired, leaving 350 dead upon the field, whilst the English heroes had only lost seventeen of their number.

Sacks of corn and biscuit boxes their only ramparts—surely such a record has few rivals? It is the one bright spot for the English in that terrible war with the Boers, which ought never to have been: or being, should have had a different ending.

It was impossible but that these thoughts should pass through the mind as we found ourselves gazing upon the very hills and plains that had echoed to the regular footfall of the soldiers' march, and where bayonets had sent forth a thousand sun flashes upon the air. When the train crossed the Ingogo River, and gradually laboured in zigzags up the height, to 4000 feet above the level of the sea, we looked down upon the battle-field of Schuins Hoogte, and could almost have touched Neill's house, from which the British troops started for the top of Majuba Hill, and where the first treaty of peace was afterwards signed.

Our journey was nearly ended, for we soon passed under the very shadow of Majuba hill, or Amajuba, which rises flat-topped, like a

table-mountain, 7000 feet towards the sky. It was here, you will remember, that occurred that terrible disaster during the fatally mismanaged war with the Boers, in 1881, when Sir George Colley in the hope of retrieving previous disasters, led 400 men to Amajuba, and succeeded in reaching the summit. And then they remained quietly doing nothing.

The Boers discovered what had been done, and expecting shot and shell, prepared to fly. Nothing happened; and so, taking fresh courage, they crept up the hill-side, picked out their enemy and fired shot after shot with deadly effect.

Those Transvaal Boers had everything in their favour. They knew every inch of their own country with all its possibilities. Almost from childhood they had lived in the very atmosphere of the saddle and gun. Their aim was certain. Every man was a soldier, and more or less accustomed to think for himself: so that every man was also more or less a commander.

Joubert was leading. All up the sides they fired, until, reaching the summit, they opened out in full strength upon the English. The latter wildly returned, doing little harm.

It was Sunday morning, the 27th of February. Presently, panic-stricken, the English fled. Out of the four-hundred men, ninety-two were killed, one hundred and thirty-four were wounded, whilst the Boers had only one man killed and five wounded. Amongst the slain was Sir George Colley.

Weeks later, when all might have been retrieved, and Sir Evelyn Wood would have led his men to victory, and the Transvaal might have been ours, came the home orders "Peace and Amnesty at any price:" and General Roberts, who had just landed at the Cape, had simply to re-embark. It seemed more than cruel; it was a fatal blunder. Good lives had been uselessly sacrificed.

The neighbourhood of Majuba has become a sad little graveyard. Surrounded by a stone wall, the brave soldiers—and that they fought like good men and true, like Englishmen, Joubert himself testified—lie in their quiet graves. To the left, as we passed, we noticed a solitary monument marking the grave of the brave but ill-fated Colley, and farther on to the right, two graves side by side, in which sleep two other officers.

Then from Majuba and all its sad influence we passed through zigzags into the darkness of a tunnel—not darker than must have seemed to Lord Chelmsford the night he spent in the devastated camp, with all his soldiers scattered round him, after the fatal day of Isandhlwana—and issuing once more into daylight, came to an anchor at the terminus of Charlestown.

Here we had risen to a height of some 5400 feet above the level of the sea, and the air was deliciously light and sparkling.

It is these high plateaux that are the charm of South Africa, and here life may often be restored under almost hopeless conditions. We were

RORKE'S DRIFT.

now in the extreme North of Natal, on the very borders of the Transvaal, that South African Republic that ought to have been a rich British possession; at present numbering more Europeans than Boers, and owing all its wealth, enterprise and prosperity to the English. If we could judge by the capacities of the station, Charlestown must be a very forlorn spot. The building was little better than a huge shed, and the refreshments provided for hungry travellers who had journeyed through the night, were such that we had to content ourselves with a crust of dry bread. Of course there are worse misfortunes at sea, but in such extremities bread seems rather a frail "staff of life" to lean upon.

We felt delightfully out of the world. An immense tract of country surrounded us, apparently as wide as the desert, and as barren. In fact most of the towns are small oases surrounded by desert, and the sand-storms are terrible. There is a drawback to everything, and sand-storms are the misery of these high table-lands.

We now had two days' travelling before us through the country, by "Coach."

Nothing ever seen in Hyde Park was finer or better appointed than the pictures of the magnificent coaches we had been shown at Durban. What we saw actually before us was a large heavy waggon with a covering like a gipsy tent, into which one had to dive, to the exclusion of light, air and scenery. It was a frightful imposition and a bitter disappointment.

Fortunately we had secured the seats nearest the door; the further end would have been torture; but H. politely resigned his in favour of the Baroness. Our fellow-passengers were of the roughest description; decent and well-behaved enough, but uncultured as the rustics they resembled. We started with a team of six mules; lean objects; who, however, proved better than they looked. The hope we had cherished ever since leaving Durban of a magnificent day's run across country on the box-seat of a splendid turn-out, inhaling the pure air of high latitudes, fell hopelessly to the ground. We had been living in a fool's paradise, but not of our own making.

As soon as we set off we found the waggon at least was no delusion—it was everything its appearance promised. The heavy wheels were guiltless of springs. As we passed over the inequalities of the road, heads occasionally came in contact with each other, and we had some time to wait to pick up the one outside passenger who had been thrown off his perch next the driver, and must have possessed at least nine lives. After all, it had its compensations: we lived in a constant state of excitement as to what would come next: whether we should find ourselves hurled to the top of Majuba Hill, or lying in fragments at the bottom of some awful precipice.

"The worst day on board the steamer was never equal to this," presently remarked Madame la Baronne, who had been turning more and more pale. "I begin to feel exceedingly ill. Do you think we shall survive this agonizing ordeal?"

It certainly was trying. The penitential meal of dry bread had not fortified our powers of endurance. Nevertheless it was amusing, if only because it was a new experience. In the new there is always something to charm. We resigned our regret at last, and made up our minds to take all the pleasure and profit possible out of the situation.

Our team went well. The roads were badly made or not made at all, and often we were lumbering and creaking over the smooth turf; occasionally dipping down a slope, which brought a terrified scream from Madame, and a vain clutch at empty space; or struggling up a sudden ascent which made her think she was about to be translated to paradise. A strong wind was blowing and every now and then a sand-storm swept past us blinding in its intensity. The tenebrous covering had its uses, but in spite of it we soon all looked like millers.

"We have all been whitewashed," cried Madame Van Tromp. "How funny we look!"

"Do you mean that for a double-entendre?" asked H.

"Ach! no!" she laughed. "I quite forgot the expression had a double meaning. So many of your sayings, it seems to me, may be taken in two ways—that is no doubt owing to the poverty of your language."

"You can hardly call English a poor language," returned H., "though perhaps not quite so rich as German, where every writer coins words to suit his own purpose."

"That is true. The number of their adjectives is appall——"

The word was never finished. A terrific lurch, more violent than any that had gone before, sent H. flying across me through the opening, landing him on the soft turf, whilst Madame la Baronne had been shot to the further end and was uncomfortably reposing in the arms of an embarrassed Boer.

"These are the vicissitudes of travel in South Africa," she laughed when we had all recovered our perpendicular positions. "We have not crossed the ocean for nothing. Are you hurt?" sympathetically to H. "I feel dreadfully bruised."

"Slightly shaken," he replied. "But it is to-morrow that we shall pay for this. We shall then feel as if we were in the worst agonies of rheumatic fever."

All this notwithstanding, the charm was there. The feeling of absolute and glorious freedom was intensely exhilarating. Crowds and towns seemed non-existent in this wilderness, in which there was no sense of being lost. The boundless sweep of country; the vast tracts; the exquisite tones; the billowy undulations; all gave one a sense of splendour and grandeur and expanse, which can only come to us and only be realised in such scenes. Hour after hour we journeyed and made way, and still the earth seemed desolate and unpeopled.

Every now and then we stopped at a solitary station, where we changed our team and post bags, and gathered up what seemed endless sacks of freight: and these solitary stations were the only signs of life we chanced upon. At one of them—I think it was called "The Three Sisters"—we lunched, and the leg of mutton placed before us was more delicious and more welcome than manna in the desert. "My own growing and killing, sir," said the owner of the station; "but it has to be prepared at a venture. Too often the Boers and such-like people bring their provisions with them." Just the remark our humorous host at Breakfast Vlei had made when we were journeying to King Williamstown.

Sometimes we changed a team for the better, sometimes for the worse. No doubt it is difficult to keep them well fed, and the unfortunate animals too often have a short life though not a merry one.

The day wore on. The aspect of the drive never varied. It was a series of far-stretching, undulating plains; here and there rising to hills, now and then almost to a mountain—often flat-topped. It is singular how great a feature of South Africa these table mountains are; so that they become a distinct impression upon one's memory.

Whenever we alighted, at the changing of teams, if there happened to be a lull in the wind, and no sandstorm, the air was bright and sparkling; one seemed to breathe-in life and lightness; the sky was clear and intensely blue, the sunshine dazzling. Before all this, the difficulties and discomforts of the journey faded into nothingness; at last became almost an attraction.

The most trying moment was after the sun went down, and twilight grew into darkness, and the sweeping plains were lost to view. Yet even this had its charm.

All the mystery of night was upon us; we felt surrounded by the unknown, by illimitable space. The stars came out and flashed with intense brilliancy; the air grew keen and cold. We wondered how the driver steered his way. It could not be by the stars, or on cloudy nights he would be at fault. It could not be by the road itself, for often there was no road at all. They must have an instinct, or a sixth sense, these South African drivers; or else they leave it all to the sagacity of the horses. We questioned, every now and then, whether we were going right, or were not entering upon a long, ghostly, unearthly drive that would never end and would lead to nowhere: an eternity of space; and then suddenly we would pull up at a station, fresh voices were heard in the darkness, lanterns flashed about, teams were changed, we were evidently expected. It was the right road after all, with a destination at the end.

Yet that longed-for goal seemed to tarry.

Towards ten o'clock, when darkness had almost caused daylight to be forgotten, a sense of fatigue stole over us that was absolutely painful. The inner man needed fortifying, the outer man felt as if the rack had been well applied to every part of his body. Hard seats had

As we travelled from Charlestown to Standerton: but with no opening in front of Waggon, and Driver's seat much higher.

grown unendurable, an upright position a matter of severe moral and physical courage. It was well that we could no longer see each other, for appearances must have been painfully ludicrous. The last hour is always the worst; and if it is a matter of endurance, the most difficult to live through.

At length, when ten o'clock had long struck upon the dial of our imagination, we suddenly swerved round a half circle, the driver whipped up his horses to a final effort; we felt, for we could not see, that we were once more approaching life and humanity; and in a few moments we had stopped in front of the hotel at Standerton. Lights gleamed and dazzled; we blinked our eyes like owls, and looked at one another, and laughed at the objects we presented. The surrounding blackness was only the more intense for the lantern gleams flashed upon us. The landlord came out—we had reached our quarters for the night: a small town or settlement in the midst of these desert plains.

With a thanksgiving, as sincere as it was silent, we passed out of the cold and darkness into light and warmth.

OLD HIGHGATE.

A CITY set upon a hill,
  Whose steep and devious ways
Amid the rush of life keep still
  The charm of by-gone days.

Another thirty years perchance,
  Ere builders shall deface,
And sweep away the old romance
  With miles of common-place:

'Till then this wooded northern height
  Will treasure many a name
That history has not ceased to write
  Upon the roll of Fame.

Here Francis Earl of Verulam
  Closed upon earth his eyes,
To know the mysteries hidden from
  The learned and the wise.

And here stands Mistress Ireton's room,
  Where one can fancy now
That Milton's music chased the gloom
  From Cromwell's rugged brow.

Down Highgate Hill the merry king
  Rode on, and did not fail
To hold carouse and revelling
  With ill-starred Lauderdale.

Here Andrew Marvel rose betimes
And spent his happiest hours
Weaving his quaint conceits and rhymes
Amid his garden flowers.

And with the advancing tide of years
Dawns yet a halcyon time,
When many a famous name appears—
The Poets in their prime.

Here came the brightest wits from town;
Those trees the grove that front
Perchance saw Shelley strolling down
And chattering with Leigh Hunt.

'Tis more than seventy years ago,
And in these very streets,
That Coleridge pacing to and fro
Came face to face with Keats.

'Twas here Blake laboured and complained;
And yonder you may see
Where Mrs. Barbauld entertained
Fine company to tea!

Here authors opened friendly doors;
And reminiscence blends
The Baillies and the Hannah Mores,
The Howitts and their friends.

And last, distinct from all the rest,
What pleasant memories rise
Of Lamb with his fantastic jest,
And strange pathetic eyes!

Still Highgate keeps a nameless charm
'Mid modern jar and fret,
A touch of subtle old-world calm
Is lingering round it yet.

And though the rising tide assails,
The brave old Suburb stands,
And still defends its hills and dales
From eager, grasping hands.

Long may it guard its storied past—
Long may it hold its sway
Against the great Iconoclast,
The builder of to-day!

CHRISTIAN BURKE.

THE SINS OF THE FATHER.

I.

ABEL PROWDE sat alone in his study, on the threshold of a new life.

The firelight touched the books and furniture with a warm glow; on a small table by his side stood a glass and decanter, and a pipe and tobacco jar lay close to his easy-chair on the floor. A fawn-coloured Irish terrier stretched himself on the hearthrug in the blaze, and outside the wind howled and the rain drove in sheets against the window-panes. It was a symbol of what was to be. Outside, the old life of storm and passion, of coldness and sin; within, the new life of happiness and quiet comfort and love.

He looked into the hot caverns of the fire and thought, and he had much to think of.

He was a man who had been brought up with wild companions, and of them all he had proved the wildest. While he was young the world bore with him. Let him sow his wild oats, it said in calm contempt, he will settle down by-and-by. But he did not seem inclined to settle down, and the prime of his life only differed from his youth in that its passions were stronger and more selfish, and its thoughts less excusable.

Year after year went by, and the world's contempt changed to anger. Vague rumours of women who had been betrayed by him, and left to hide their shame in the misery of a lifetime, were circulated among those who knew him; stories of fearful orgies of drunkenness and crime in which he had taken no subordinate part were whispered in clubs and smoking-rooms; and people who were not considered to be over particular began to exclude him from their houses.

But he snapped his fingers at respectability and went his own way, the way of enjoyment. No one knew better how to tread it, and no one cared less if it led to perdition. The world of society dropped him, and he made a world and society of his own. And he lived fiercely and fastly in it, and even happily, as the salamander will live in fire.

On his fortieth birthday he was as careless and licentious as when he came of age. But the life was beginning to tell on him. The handsome face was worn and lined; the strong hand began to shake; the tall straight figure began to stoop; and the quick brilliant mind was not what it used to be. Things began to escape his memory; his thoughts were often confused; at times his eyes would grow dull and vacuous; he would find he was thinking of nothing; and sometimes a vague terror would seize his mind, and leave him for a few moments half paralysed with fear.

Fortunately none of these signs escaped his notice, and a voice whispered to him that a change must be made, or an awful doom awaited him in the remaining years of his life.

But the fixed habits of a man of forty are not changed easily, and as he set himself to stem the stream of his destruction, the shadow of a great terror fell upon him. He was powerless to change his fate; there were none to help him, and alone he was too weak. But yet the change did come, and had anybody told Abel Prowde that it would come to him through a woman, he would have laughed in his face. His ideas of women were founded on his own experience, and that had not been an elevating one. To him they were temptresses or fools, and no angel face had ever been among them. Toys to be played with, not goddesses to be worshipped.

But nevertheless a woman saved him. After a year of hopeless struggle and despair, he met Ruth Vane, and the light began to break upon him. She showed him how good and sweet a lovely woman may be; she taught him what a man should be; and in the first few weeks of their acquaintance the seeds of the new life were sown.

The ground had been prepared through terror of the darkness that lay before him; but the seeds were sown by the hand of love. Wreck that he was, she loved him, and dragged him from the sea that was threatening to drown him, that she might love him the more worthily. And in his own dark heart love began to dawn, and gave him strength of purpose, and courage to fight, and before a year was over the change was made.

Abel Prowde had never been a truly bad man, but love of pleasure will drag an angel's heart to hell, if there be no religious strength or helping hand to save it. The change in him was true and genuine. He had cast off his old life from him. He did not pretend to do it from the best of motives, the fear and love of God. He did it because the prospect of an awful future shadowed him, and because the love of a pure and noble woman lifted him up. She influenced him; and he wished to be worthy of her. But by degrees her own strong religious feeling coloured his life, and true goodness began to form in him. Repentance for sin took the place of fear of its consequences. Nor did he then dream that he had not yet reaped the fruit of bitterness and tears.

And as he sat in his chair, with his feet on the fender, and pipe in his mouth, all the past rose before him, and an inward prayer for forgiveness was wrung from his very soul.

And then he rose, and taking out a drawer from a writing-table, placed it on his knees. It was filled with letters tied up in different packets, lace handkerchiefs, bits of ribbon, and other feminine trifles. He threw them one by one into the fire; he did not even read the letters. These records of past triumphs had to be destroyed, for the day after to-morrow he was to marry Ruth Vane, and the fulness of the new life was to begin. And it says much for the genuineness

of the change in the man, that he burnt them without a regret, and that the only sighs that escaped him were those of sorrow for the stories of shame that these relics brought to his mind. "As I burn these, so do I burn the past," he murmured, raking the ashes together. But the ashes of his past were yet to be mingled with his daily bread.

II.

For a year Abel Prowde and his wife lived in a pure and quiet happiness. After his marriage he left London, and took a small house on the Welsh coast. The long line of dark cliffs was here broken by a little valley running down into the sea. In this shelter, not fifty yards from where the tide foamed up on the shingle, was the low white dwelling that they called their home, and there, far from the stir and passion of life in the great city, the man's past grew dim, and the new life grew brighter day by day. All temptation was put from him. The eyes that had grown weary of theatre and ballet, found rest and happiness in the storm and the sunset, and the ear that voluptuous music had failed to charm, found pleasure in the moaning and crashing of the sea; and in his wife's love was centred the sunshine of his life.

And then one night there was a great bustle and stir at the Crags, and a trap drove up to the door, and servants hurried to and fro.

The master of the house sat anxiously in his study, until they came and told him that a son was born to him. A great joy filled his heart, but before the morning came the angel of death had turned it into sorrow. For the mother of the child died, and father and son were left to face the world alone.

* * * * *

Over the man's deep sorrow we will draw a veil, and leave him with the God that he had so lately come to know. For awhile his wife's death was to him as the passing of the sun from heaven. She had been the light that had guided him from the darkness of despair, and led him to happiness and peace. And now she too had passed into the darkness, and left him to stumble on alone. For a short time life was a blank to him: wherever he set his eyes, or placed his foot, something seemed to be missing; every little action was strange and shadowed with the memory of what had been. In their solitude his life had been so bound up with hers, that he now felt that half of his own nature was dead. A cloud lay over sun, and sea, and landscape, and a silence on the music of the waves. She was dead, and with her, beauty in everything had died.

And then one day they brought him his boy. It was a year after her death, and till that day the child had never been suffered to cross his path; for had he not hated it, and in his heart called it the murderer of her who was dead. But now they disobeyed him, and

the trembling nurse brought it in, saying nothing, but fearing much.

The child looked at its father with wondering brown eyes, and the man thought he saw his dead wife looking at him. He snatched up the boy, and kissed him passionately, and from that hour he rarely let him from his sight. The worn grey-haired man and the quiet large-eyed child were constant companions, who never grew tired of each other's company.

When Ruth died the good that she had done did not die with her. Truth and virtue were now realities in the life of Abel Prowde, and religion was something more than an empty name. Fearful lest he should drift back into sin from want of occupation he devoted himself to reading a particular branch of knowledge, and working in his garden on the cliff. The child too was his care. To teach him to talk, and walk, and read, and watch him exercise his sturdy brown limbs along the shore and in the water, was more than enough to keep the man from idleness.

The boy was strong and healthy, and the father, who had almost feared that he would be weak and ailing, gave a sigh of relief as he watched him stoutly tumbling about the beach, and lifting large stones into the sea.

"I have long terrified myself with the thought that many innocent sons have paid the penalty for their father's vices with lifelong weakness. I thank God that the load has been taken from my mind." And the child grew to boyhood, and his strong limbs and brilliant intellect were the pride of his father and all who loved him. And none saw that there was a cloud on the horizon, for as yet it was no bigger than a man's hand.

* * * * *

It was when the lad was twelve years old that the change was first observed in him. Father and son were walking along the top of the cliffs towards the neighbouring port. It was a hot still day. A haze lay over the horizon, and the air quivered from the ground. A ship lay motionless in the distance, the sea as calm as a lake, the sky above one bright unbroken blaze of blue.

Philip was unusually silent. He was wont to chatter incessantly with his father, as freely as boys do with one another; but to-day he barely answered, and let the conversation run on without contributing more than a word here and there.

As they came to the highest part of the cliffs, he stopped, and flinging himself on his face, burst into tears.

"Phil, my boy, what is the matter?" But no answer came, only the sound of passionate sobbing.

"Phil! Phil! What is it? speak, my boy; are you in pain?"

He looked up wildly at his father. His face was pale, and his eyes dilated with terror.

"I am frightened, father; take me home."

"You silly boy!" he said sharply. "What is there to be frightened at? We are yards from the edge of the cliff."

"It is not that, father. It is—oh, I don't know what it is. Do let us go home."

They went home, and in the evening the boy was cheerful and bright as ever. However, a great change had passed over him from that day. At times the same unknown terror would seize him. If left alone in the dark he would tremble, and beg to be given a light. The supernatural brilliance of conversation, and almost unhealthy quickness of wit, were clouded by hours of dulness and moping, and even tears.

His father began to be alarmed, and sent for a doctor. For over an hour the three were closeted together, and then the boy was sent out to play. Half an hour afterwards the doctor left, and Abel Prowde sat alone in his study, his face bowed in his hands, his whole frame shaking in an agony of grief.

"My God, my God, take this curse from him, and lay it upon me. He is innocent: I am guilty. Take my life, my reason, but spare this child of mine."

And in the silence of that awful hour, a voice cried in his ears the terrible words that were to burn themselves upon his brain. "The sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children." Truly there was a greater bitterness than the bitterness of death.

III.

THE next few years were years of hideous punishment for sin. Day by day the father saw the son that he loved so passionately, passing gradually into complete imbecility. Day by day the intervals of brightness and lucidity grew fewer and fewer, until they disappeared altogether. Darkness had gathered round the once brilliant mind, and sadness had clouded the once bright and boyish spirits. The only person Philip still knew was his father, and they would sit together and walk together as of old, but yet as far apart as the living and the dead.

A terrible curse for any father to see his only son, his only companion in a lonely place, losing his reason day by day. But a thrice terrible curse when he knows that the madness is the work of his own hands, the fruit of an ill-spent life. And this he knew. The doctor inquired into his past, and when he had heard it, he said nothing. But he asked no further questions. He was satisfied.

But the father did not shrink from the punishment that God had laid upon him. He could have sent his son away from him, and removed the living curse from before his eyes, and could himself have drowned his cares in the intoxication of the old life. But he faced his sorrow as a man who has deserved it, and must make atonement

for his sin. Philip was never violent or dangerous. He merely lived as one who is dead in life, understanding nothing, seeing nothing, enjoying nothing. His father was always by his side, always in the burning agony of that most fearful and pitiful of sights, the wreck of a noble human mind. And every hour the steel was driven deeper into his soul. Truly if the man had sinned, he was suffering now.

And so the son grew to manhood. A strong, finely-built man, with the limbs of a Hercules. Abel was a man of no mean height or strength, but he was inferior in inches and muscle to his unfortunate boy, whose body seemed to grow stronger as his intellect became more feeble. And no one but the father knew that manhood might never have been reached, and that the lad's life was several times hanging in the balance. No one but the father knew, for no one but God knew the father's heart, or had seen him lay his hand on the weapon when Philip slept, or had known his thoughts when they walked near the edge of the precipice. But some power had held him back, though for the boy's sake he hourly prayed that he were dead, for that were better than this living death. Yet God's mercy was still overshadowing them, and the end was not far off.

* * * * *

It was a glorious evening towards the end of September. Father and son stood together on the cliffs and looked across the sea towards the setting sun. Dark clouds were gathering on the western horizon, and the sun, plunging into them, cast a lurid glow through the long grey bank of vapour. Then it was swallowed up, and only a bright edging to the dark masses marked its tomb.

"There is a storm brewing," Abel said. There was no answer; he never expected one now, and only talked to make the silence less terrible. "The great clouds have devoured the light," the young man murmured, "the darkness is cruel. Poor light!" And the father thought of the darkness that had been more cruel than death, and had swallowed the light of that young life.

The storm arose quickly. A west wind drove the clouds across the sea until they covered the whole sky. The waves broke louder and louder on the shore, and the rising tide rolled heavily up the beach to the foot of the cliffs. Then a flash of lightning split the darkness, and the crash of thunder echoed along the rocks and distant mountains. The rain began to fall in large warm drops, and the father took his son's arm.

"Come, we must go home, Phil. There is a terrible storm coming on."

The poor fellow was usually as obedient as a dumb animal, but for once he did not notice his father's wishes. He shook the hand off his arm, and seemed fascinated with the lightning.

"Come, Philip, come."

"How lovely the light is," he muttered. "Father, where did the poor light go when it died? Is it buried?"

"It will come down again, Phil. You shall have it in the morning."

"There it is, father, lines of it—ah, the darkness has swallowed it," as a flash of forked lightning spread over the sky in veins, and made the gloom seem more intense.

"Come along, Phil. We must go home," and he laid his hand firmly on his son's arm, and began to move towards the Crags.

"The light! the light! I want to find it! Where has it gone to? Ah, there it is, in the waves." A flash descended on the sea, and Philip, shaking his father's hand roughly off his arm, sprang to the edge of the cliff, and before he could be stopped, stretched his arms towards the place where the flash had vanished. Another burst across the sky in the same place. "I have found you, my beautiful light, my lost lovely light."

Abel Prowde dashed after his son, but when he came to the edge of the cliff he stood alone; he called out; there was no sound but the beating of the waves two hundred feet below, and the roll of the thunder above his head. And then a wailing cry, such as a dumb animal will make in intense pain, came up from the rocks below, continued for a minute, and died away.

"Philip, Philip," he cried, as he cast himself on his face, and peered over the edge.

Again that fearful cry.

"He is alive," he muttered, "but he will die, for the tide is rising. God has done for me what I have not dared to do myself." And he turned away from the edge.

Again that low long wail of agony. The man stopped. The same power that had held him back before was with him now. "Shall I save him," he said to himself; "save him for years of a living death, with no reason and no happiness, with a shattered body and a clouded mind? Would this be love to him. Yet he is dying in agony, and alone I cannot bring him up the cliff. I cannot obtain help before the tide has risen and covered him. Oh, God, guide me, and give me strength to do that which is right."

In a few moments his mind was made up, and he began the descent of the cliff. It was not difficult by day to a man of nerve and strength, but it would be almost a miracle if a descent were made safely in the dark. How Abel Prowde accomplished it, he himself hardly knew, but he reached the bottom and stood beside his son on the piece of fallen rock where he was lying. The sea was already dashing heavily against the foot of the cliff, and if Philip had not fallen on the raised rock, he would have been already dead. His legs were broken, and he could not move. He moaned with pain, and now and then a long low wail broke from his lips.

His father knelt on the rocks beside him, and pressed his lips to the wet forehead. The spray was even now soaking them through and through. "My son," he said, "I cannot save you. But you will not die alone, for it is impossible to return."

"The light, the light, the beautiful light," Philip moaned. "I could not grasp it. It has gone."

And still the tide rose. It now washed over the rock. The two men could not cling to their place much longer. The natural instinct to preserve life grew stronger in the father's breast. He looked at the straight cliffs, where he came down, but he could not go up again. He was helpless, the last twenty feet he had jumped down a precipitous rock. There was no getting back. Then a great terror seized him. For the hour of death was at hand. But the man's heart was strong. Again he cried, "My son, my son, I cannot save you; but we will die together," and a great calm fell upon him, for was it not all for the best. He raised Philip's head above the sweeping foaming water, and the young man clasped his arms about his father's neck and kissed him passionately.

"Father, we will find the light before the morning comes. The light, the beautiful light."

* * * * *

The next day some fishermen found two bodies locked in each other's arms, battered and driven up among the rocks. They were buried in the little churchyard by the sea, father and son, in one rocky grave. At last dawn had risen on the darkness of their lives, and the light was on them.

J. B. Harris-Burland.

A BURIED GRIEF.

So you are dead and gone, old Sorrow,
Only yesterday there you were,
Filling my heart with an aching care
Of grief for to-day and fear for to-morrow:
Now the skeleton's gone and the cupboard's bare.

And in your stead is born, old Sorrow,
Hope, whose bright torch turns night to day,
And makes winter bloom with the flowers of May;
Till even your memory seems to borrow
Bright hues—because you have passed away.

Old grief, once I thought you could never cease;
Now I sing your requiem! Rest in peace.

BY THE LIGHT OF A CAMP FIRE.

A TRUE EXPERIENCE.

IT was on the shores of Lake Taupo that it happened: years ago, long before the tourist found his way to that New Zealand inland sea, and in the days when the visits of the pakeha (white-faced stranger) were as rare as talking birds.

Major Drummond and I were spending a time of enforced idleness at Tokaanu—a Maori settlement at the extreme southern end of the Lake—awaiting the pleasure of a chief to make up his mind about a matter we need not go into here. This district is alive with hot springs, and for days our sole diversion consisted in scrambling out of one of the puias—as they are locally termed—and tumbling headlong into another, with a happy disregard for the therapeutic value of the different waters.

At length, the novelty of the pastime wearing away, and the chief apparently being as far from coming to a decision as ever, we determined to go off somewhere and have a day's pig-hunting.

Upon inquiry we learned that some distance along the shore of the Lake, beyond the rocky promontory of Karangahape, there was a spot reputed to be swarming with wild pigs.

I say "reputed," for the Maoris could speak from surmise only, as the locality was "tapu," and consequently never visited by them. Years before, a valorous chief of power and high command, one of the terrible battle-fighters who lived in the days of the noble dignity of his race, had died and been buried there. After the ceremony of interment the high priest had unexpectedly declared the whole neighbourhood sacred. Immediately the frightened people—leaving everything as it happened to be when the dread decree of tapu was pronounced, for to have touched one single article subsequently would have been sacrilege to be atoned for only by death—rushed in a mass to the gateway of the palisade and passed out, never to return.

In this unceremonious flight many pigs were left behind, and it was a natural supposition that they had multiplied and become abundant in the land.

The hope of a good day's sport which this information had kindled in our breasts, was, however, discouraged by the head chief, who, on hearing of our inquiries touching the whereabouts of the place, summoned us before him and forbade us to go near the consecrated ground under any pretence whatever.

Notwithstanding this rigorous interdiction, our thoughts wandered to the tusky boars there must be there after so many years' preservation, and we hungered for forbidden fruit. There was one way out of the

difficulty. If we could procure the services of some Maori we might go by stealth.

Fortunately for our purpose there happened to be in the village an old native named Hoti, in whose eyes the ways of the white man had early found favour. While the rest of his tribe clung to their superstitious rites and religious ceremonies with increased fervour—for the Maoris of this district were the last of the race to accept Christianity—he had gladly availed himself of the teachings of the pakeha, and conformed, to the best of his ability, to civilised conditions of life.

Whether he was sincere in his conversion, or was still a savage at heart practising a semblance of civilisation merely for the material advantages which a benevolent but ignorant Government were conferring upon all who professed peace as a sort of bribe, to damp the combustible elements of latent savagery, we were unable to say. However that may have been, as he declared in strong terms that he had relinquished all connection with his ancient superstitious belief, we thought he might be safely approached about the matter we had most at heart.

In a speech instinct with tact, for he knew the terrible awe in which tapu was held by the Maoris, the Major sounded him.

Great was our delight when the old fellow assured us, as he held out his hand for the guerdon which we had thought fit to promise him beforehand, that tapu had ceased to have any significance for him, save as a reminder of a heathenish faith he had long since abandoned. He would, he said, have a canoe and two good pig-dogs ready within the hour.

Before starting we were subjected to a severe questioning by the chief as to our intended movements; but thanks to Hoti's civilisation, his answers, though not strictly veracious, were full of imaginative ingenuity; so that all suspicion was allayed.

It was a calm, sunshiny morning, and the surface of the Lake was like glass; so, merrily plying our paddles in rhythm to a Maori song we sent the light canoe skimming over the water.

Well on in the day, when the afternoon sun was reaching down to touch the towering peak of Puketapu, we passed beneath a precipitous cliff three hundred feet high, which sloped rapidly away on the far side to the level of the lake. Abruptly turning the point of this headland we paddled into a little bay and ran the nose of the canoe upon the beach which fringed the shore.

Bundling out the dogs—great savage brutes that would have thought no more of hounding demons back to the gates of Hades, if such might be attempted, than of snapping at one of the flies which were buzzing about their ears—we hauled up the canoe and proceeded to explore the sacred place.

Before us stretched an open space where once had stood the populous settlement which had been so hastily abandoned. Here and there at wide intervals a lichen-spotted post, all awry, marked the

line where ran the palisade. Scattered about within the old enclosure, half buried in damp and clotted herbage, lay decaying pieces of the great chief's mausoleum—blocks and slabs of wood, carved with exquisite skill into grotesque representations of the human form, and ornamented with a bewildering network of symmetrical and significant scroll designs.

And that was all that the niggard hand of Time had spared as evidence of man's whilom occupation. Nothing remained of the primeval forest but the skeletons of trees rising out of, or lying upon, a dank bed of rotting leaves and branches through which our feet went crashing at every step.

A spring far up the scarred hill-side fed a stream of dark water in its course adown a barren gully.

On it came, not like an ordinary New Zealand stream of silvery brightness which babbles in tinkling laughter along a bed fringed every foot of the way with fragile fern and tender moss, but gliding sullenly over a slimy rock here, twisting round an impeding boulder there, anon crawling beneath a fallen tree—always quiet and snake-like—till it reached the level ground below and slid on beneath a floor of rotting leaves and branches. At times a ray of sunshine, breaking through the decaying crust of vegetable matter, seemed to speckle its black surface with scales of light and gave it the very appearance of a noisome reptile stealthily creeping away below.

On nearing the lake the stream coiled itself for a space into the form of a gloomy pool, half choked with dry rushes and sickly scum, and then, slipping over the oozy lips of the tarn, wriggled down the bank without noise, and went floating away on the surface of the blue water in a long, black twisting line—snake-like to the last.

Stillness was over everything. But it was a peace which brought no beauty to the place. Nought was there but desolation and decay. All life, animal and vegetable alike, seemed to have been scorched by a blast from some devastating fire. It was a dead spot. A spot where Nature had ceased to work.

We were too tired, having sat so long in a cramped position in the canoe, to care for any sport that day. Moreover, by the time we had looked round the place the day was almost spent; so we sent Hoti to hunt for a pig for our supper while we got the camp in order for the night. By the time we had cut the fern for our bedding, made a fire, and got the water boiling, the Maori was back with the hams of a small pig slung over his shoulder. He reported that a little distance back, where the fern-root was large, he had seen on all sides unmistakable signs of pigs being present in numbers. No better relish to tickle our appetites could we have had than this news, and the strips of toasted pork, washed down with "billy tea," tasted as food can only taste when eaten in the open air by the happy and hungry.

By the time we had swallowed the last mouthful and knocked the

tea-leaves out of our pannikins, a faint twilight shade—the forerunner of the brief dusk which in Austral climes takes the place of northern gloaming—was upon us.

Piling high the fire-logs, for the air was chilly, we stretched ourselves upon spring-like couches of fern and lit our pipes. The dogs, feeling cold, crept near the fire and lay down beside their master.

Wrapped in our blankets, but with no other covering or shelter between us and the heavens, we lay dreamily gazing at the flames as they leaped into the black pall overhead; experiencing meanwhile that soothing and voluptuous sensation which smoking after a hearty meal alone affords. For a time we talked languidly of the prospect of sport on the morrow. Gradually our voices became lower and our remarks more brief. Finally came the hush of repose.

The Major and Hoti dropped off to slumber and were at rest; but, do what I would, I could not sleep.

From time to time an owl hooted from out the deep shadow of the dead forest. At intervals a shrill cry of a passing kaka, high in heaven, came down through space. Occasionally, far away and faint, from some lonely mere by the dreary shore, boomed the deep note of the bittern. But these natural sounds of night did not disturb the silence in any sense; they seemed rather to make manifest and intensify the stillness which lay otherwise over the earth; a stillness which became so strangely pronounced and oppressive that it was with difficulty I suppressed an inclination to cry out aloud and break the spell.

As I lay watching the dancing firelight playing on my features, I saw my companions stir and turn and heard them mutter in their slumber.

The dogs, too, appeared as restless and ill at ease as they, for they frequently rose, turned, and uttering a faint whimper laid down again. The wind which had risen at nightfall moaned among the tree-tops with a dirge-like sound which was melancholy in the extreme.

Nought was visible at any distance save when a log burned through, and, falling, sent a cloud of sparks whirling into the black night air.

Then for a few seconds, as the wraith-like folds of smoke were wafted to and fro—to one's fancy like the shades of despairing souls aimlessly floating through space, yet finding no rest in their eternal wanderings—the white trunks of the dead trees, illumined by the fitful glare, loomed out of the black void, phantasmal, vague; while the dangling strands of moss swaying from the blackened boughs, stretched forth like spectral anguish-riven limbs, were touched with the lurid reflection of the glow, and assumed the weird semblance of ghostly drapery streaming in the murky air—fantastic, unreal.

Small wonder, I thought, that the dwellers in those wilds, when travelling, should dread the approaching night, and fear to sleep in the gloomy depths of the bush! Small wonder, too, that such

profound solemnity should touch the springs of morbid fancy and fill the untutored mind with superstitious awe. The Maoris might well speak with bated breath of dreaded things of evil, and people the waste solitudes with fallacies of the brain—hideous and enigmatic!

Even while I was most deeply buried in eerie thoughts such as these, the dogs of a sudden sprang to their feet and, uttering a few premonitory growls, rushed in the direction of the stagnant pool, barking loudly.

I reached out my arm and touched the Major.

"All right," he said quietly. "I hear."

For a space all was still. Then there came drifting to us a low sound, at first strange and indefinable, but which grew, as we listened, into a canine whine; now gradually rising to a mournful wail, now ebbing away to silence in lingering cadence. It was an appealing cry; a cry unlike anything I ever heard in my waking senses.

For a time all was quiet. Then with the suddenness of a thunder-clap the dogs burst forth in a regular storm of barking which was dreadful to hear; for it was not in anger that they barked but in abject fear.

The Major seized some of his fern bedding and threw it on the fire. Brightly it burned up and showed the animals backing step by step as though retreating before an advancing foe. Nearer and nearer they came towards us; still backing, still barking in a horrible, frenzied way.

When opposite where we lay, and at a distance of about twenty feet, the Major again threw some fern upon the fire. Instantly it burst into flames and lit up the place like day. I peered at the ground before the dogs to see what could be the cause of their eldritch clamour.

There was nothing there! There was nothing that I could see; yet the dogs were convulsed with a violent shuddering in every fibre.

Still barking furiously, still pursuing the same backward movement before the invisible object of their dread, they slowly crossed the open space and reached the spot where the monument to the deified chief had stood. Then, after a few moments of shuddering hesitation, the quivering wretches gathered themselves together for a spring, and, uttering two awe-struck yells of such anguish, such horrible despair, as I hope never to hear again, flew savagely at something in the air of the height of a man's throat, and then fled into the darkness howling dismally.

For a few moments my head spun round like a top, and there appeared to be a weight as of cold lead at the pit of my stomach which threatened to turn me sick.

When I had recovered from my state of practical unconsciousness I turned to speak to Hoti, but on catching sight of the face beneath the tangled mass of black hair I was struck dumb. The Maori's eyes were fixed and staring with horror; his whole frame shook as though

palsied; and he cowered to the earth crazed with fear. He opened his twitching lips to speak but no sound came through them. The struggle within from some dire emotion warped his features out of recognition and made his face ghastly to see. Suddenly with a cry of unspeakable misery he staggered to his feet and, seizing a burning brand from the fire (for a Maori dare not move abroad in the dark) he waved it aloft and rushed headlong from the place.

As the Major and I stood in silence watching the erratic movement of the blazing stick as its bearer leaped over or dodged round the many impediments in his way, I furtively glanced at my companion to see if I could read aught in his face that would tend to dissipate the horrible suspicions which flooded my mind. But the scrutiny brought no relief to me, for I noticed that his brow was deeply furrowed and that his lips were tightly closed like those of a strong man battling with pain.

Whilst I stood thus scanning the Major's features my ears caught the sound of a wail, spoken in the beautiful vernacular, as it floated along on the still night air. "Alas! Alas! I must die, for what avail is sacrifice and prayer against the furious power of desecrated tapu? Is it not the outraged spirit of the angry chief, whose grave I have profaned? Ah! Woe is me! Why did I hearken unto the wicked words of the white stranger from the other side of the big sea, for now I shall be given over to the powers of darkness below—even to the depths of Nuku! The waters of my life shall ebb out and the darkness of Po shall enshroud me in the long night—in the night of manifold darkness! Alas! Alas! I must die!"

The weird lamentation ceased, and the spark was lost to view in the high fern which clothed the hill-side; but, from the direction it was taking when we last saw it, Hoti apparently was making for the summit of the cliff.

After an interval of anxious watching we saw a small star shoot out of the sky, and, falling in the direction of the north—the far north where the spirit-path leads to the spirit-land—bury itself in the lake.

* * * * *

At this distance of time I attribute no superstitious importance to the strange incident of that night, for now I know it to have been nothing but a wreath of miasmal mist which probably the heat from the fire caused to ascend from that stagnant pool. But at the time, situated as we were in the gloomy depths of the bush, and beset with the vagueness and mystery of the day grown old, I think that one may be pardoned for momentarily forgetting the lessons which reason teaches, and finding one's thoughts turning towards shades that are said to walk in darkness and are supposed to haunt such a spot as this.

BEWITCHED.

RANT at your liking against these last days and "the whole stuffy business of living and dressing, and dining and going to offices" —even in the Metropolitan Postal Districts the great notes sound now and again in some man's ears, and though that man may essay to hide him in the deep clefts and caves of the daily round of custom and the common-place, yet Love and Hate and Sorrow and the great black terrors of life will find him out.

That or something like it Firebras said when he told me in what wise a shuddering terror came to Middlemist Calverley, in the West Central District, and abode with him there for the space of three weeks. Firebras told it me as though it had happened to someone I didn't know, a long time since; but I heard one or two trifling bits of the story from Calverley himself, and from his manner I judged that the whole thing must have happened only the other day, and that the man it happened to was Calverley.

Firebras knows a good many queer stories. He is a delightful person, but he does sometimes say the most astounding things. Only he has such an honest, serene, convincing manner that you don't find out how astounded you are till he has finished talking to you and gone away. Then you go back to your old view of life, bounded by the morning and evening papers.

Calverley is a critic. It is his profession, and he, following it honestly, makes a living by it, as other men do by carting dust, or promoting companies. He had vast advantages over most of the other critics. He had been to Charterhouse, where he had been undistinguished, and he had been to Balliol, whence he had issued "Dreams and Cadences"—for private circulation. From Oxford he passed into the society of the people in Chelsea who say clever things. He said several of these himself—and, heartened by the success which attended them, he began to say them as a craft. They were not very clever things, but from the pen of a man who could "fear the Greeks even while bearing gifts" with correct scansion, and could tell you that your minor poet was a fearful wild fowl, they cut like whips.

Now it fell upon a time that Merlino, a young London Italian, wrote an operetta; and the chance of his life coming, it was produced at the Hilarity at a morning performance. It found leniency at the hands of the dailies, and some of the evening papers were even roused to a mild enthusiasm, and illustrated their notices of it with grimy little process blocks. And it was put into the evening bill.

Calverley had approached the first scene with a judicial interest, but when the coarse person from Fleet Street who sat next him in the stalls, came back after the interval, breathing warm brandy and water,

and under its influence slapped his great hands in rude approval, the music began to annoy Calverley intensely, and even while it was still at his ears, he was turning phrases in his mouth that boded ill for Merlino. It rained as he left the theatre, and after walking a hundred yards, he stepped into a cab, damp and discomforted and very angry. And his wrath going about seeking an object settled at length on Merlino and his operetta—and he wrote a notice of it.

Firebras showed me the notice, but I have forgotten it, though I know it was bitterly clever. It held Merlino at arms' length, at tongs' length even, as "your Italian"; it applauded his industry and research; it quoted freely from the banalities of the libretto, and whether it commented on orchestration, airs or choruses, it seemed to look up and down Merlino's poor little provincial person from head to boots, and deep into his poor little provincial soul, with a cold impersonal interest.

"I think," said Calverley, when he had finished, "that that will make Saffron Hill sit up. If he's a reasonable creature, he'll go back to his piano organ and his monkey."

And Merlino "sat up."

He said the criticism had cut the throat of his operetta, that it was cowardly—that it had ruined him. And indeed the operetta flickered for a week or two and died before any air of it had been so much as whistled in the street. Then Merlino said he would have revenge. When he had said that once or twice, he found that he meant it, and so, being an Italian, he never said it again. But Firebras, who was always about those foreigners' clubs, heard him say it and gave the word to Calverley, when he met him in Oxford Street. Calverley stiffened his little figure, saying—"Revenge? let him try it on by all means—one doesn't brawl with your foreigner here, one whistles for a policeman."

"Well," said Firebras, "he won't call with a horsewhip, for that is an English custom, and I think your policeman will keep him off you in the street; but, if ever you happen to be taking your evening stroll past Cleopatra's Needle and meet Merlino alone, you'd better make for Villiers Street and the traffic as sharp as you can cut. And there are other things you wouldn't listen to, but——"

"What things?"

"If ever I saw a man with the *jettatura*—the evil eye——"

"Rubbish!" said Calverley.

"Oh! very well, just as you like."

They had turned the corner of the little alley—Ducie Street that led to Russell Row where Calverley's chambers are. The evening had fallen and the gas was burning in the stone-flagged passage.

"Come in and have half a pipe," invited Calverley.

As they passed in at the front door, a man in a cloak and soft hat hurried down the stairs and brushed past them turning his face to the wall. Firebras pulled his companion by the arm.

"See that," he said softly, "how these Italians hang together!"

"What do you mean?" asked Calverley severely.

Firebras pointed towards the door. "Friend of Merlino's," he said; "seen them together scores of times."

"Coffee for four, eh?" said Calverley when they had climbed the stairs; and he giggled as he put in his latch-key.

"If it had been that errand he would not have passed with his nose to the wall. He's been to have a look at your quarters. Lock up carefully when I go."

"Rubbish!" said Calverley again, "rubbish, I tell you." But he said it less decidedly. "What have I done," he complained, "but cut up his fearful foolishness?"

"Merlino thinks you have ruined his chances in life. What would an Englishman feel inclined to do to you if your humorous quill had taken away the support of his aged father and mother?"

"But Merlino hasn't any old father and mother to keep."

"That's it," said Firebras, "that's just it. He's got himself, and if you knew Merlino, you'd know that Merlino is more to him than mother or father, or tender sister or brother."

"Come to the window—sweet is the night air," said Calverley, and they leaned out with their elbows on the sooty stone parapet. The night air was not sweet at all; it was cold, and clammy, and gusty, and Firebras shivered. The other took him by the arm.

"Look there," he said impressively, "look down at yonder dark figure motionless against the railings opposite."

"Well?" queried Firebras.

"That," Calverley remarked, "is a policeman, and," he added with mingled pride and trustfulness, "the tireless guardian of a critic's sleep."

"Pardon me," said Firebras, whose eyes were better than his friend's, "the heavy step approaching is that of your tireless guardian, and at his approach yonder dark figure recollects an appointment and hurries off in his soft hat and black cloak. I incline to think, my dear Calverley, that he is another Italian."

"Rubbish!" said Calverley once more, and Firebras, beginning to find his rejoinders monotonous, soon bade him a good-night and went away. Calverley locked his door and went to bed. But he could not get to sleep. He told himself that he had smoked too much, and he lay tossing, and turning, and thinking over what Firebras had said till he had got it all very thoroughly before him. After two hours that seemed like twelve, he got up, put on his dressing-gown, raked the fire together, and throwing on some coals, sat down before it. Then a rather curious thing happened.

When he went to get the coals he had left the door of his sitting-room open, because he felt that he should like to be reminded that his outer door was shut, and locked. And now as he sat by the fire toasting his chilled legs, his eyes fell again on this door, and he

ould not get rid of an absurd fancy that there was some-one on the ther side of it. He held his breath and kept still—very still—like a unted man. A minute went by, two, three. In the stillness he ould hear his watch ticking on the dressing-table in the next room. hen quite without sound the handle of his outer door turned twice -round and back again—and as the lock moved in its loose socket, ie door came forward some sixteenth of an inch as if in response to ie pressure of a shoulder outside. The cold sweat stood heavily on alverley's forehead—he was chilled and frightened to the ends of his ngers and feet. He held his breath still, and in the silence he saw ie handle turn again. Then came a little sigh as though the creature n the other side of the door had been holding its breath also, and olding it too long; and then the soft pad-pad of stockinged feet oing down the old stairs. The stairs in Russell Row are too solid creak. It is the stairs of the new villa that do that.

Calverley released his limbs and lungs from their tension, and when shivering minute or two had assured him that he need no longer ar the face of his own door handle, he locked his parlour door on e inside, and then double-locked himself into his bedroom which ened from the parlour on the side furthest from the front door. hen he had done this and had had some whiskey, he got into bed id slept like a child, because his nerves were worn-out with ten inutes' terror of something he did not believe in.

II.

HAT was the beginning of it. Next day Calverley rose feeling feeble d wearied. He assured himself that he must have fancied all that out the door, so he went to the ironmonger's opposite the *York-ire Grey*, and bought a new screwdriver and a neat brass bolt, and put this on his outer door before he went to dinner. He dined at s club, and met a man there who told him that Merlino was a eapolitan or Corsican, or something, and that he, Calverley, was in olly romantic Vendetta business. The man meant no harm; he dn't believe it, and Calverley didn't believe it, of course, but somehow found he was not so hungry as he had thought he was.

As he came up Ducie Street late that evening, he was seized with strust of a dark shadow in an archway a little ahead, and crossed e road to avoid it.

"My nerves are going to pieces," he said; "I must get a tonic ide up at the stores."

As he climbed the stairs, it occurred to him that dining out was a itless extravagance, and that a man might do worse than have his ner sent in from Veroni's, and eat it quietly among his books in the stened glow of his thirty-five shilling reading-lamp.

Of course that business of the handle last night was mere fanc still. . . . Calverley did not go to bed, and he left his parlour do open and sat by the fire watching the brass handle of his outer door.

And the stillness grew and grew, and again he held his breath, an he heard a soft sound as of stockinged feet on the landing outsid They were five long, long minutes in which Calverley wondered wheth the five-and-ninepenny bolt would not have been stronger after a The handle did not turn this time, but there was a curious little clic clicking sound inside the lock, like the noise the locksmith mak when you lose the key of your secretaire and he comes round to s to it. The bolt held. Calverley heard the soft steps go away, hugge himself on his bolt and went to bed. But he felt this couldn't go o and he wrote to Firebras. No answer came, for Firebras was out town. If Calverley had had any relations living in town, he wou have gone to see them about this time, but they were in Jersey. S they were of no use to him.

He felt strangely weak and tremulous. The days went on and I thought much, very much of what Firebras had said. He was ve careful. He went on living as much of his old life as his new pr cautions left him room for. He wrote his reviews, he attended h *matinées*, but he did not go out any more at night, and his meals we sent in from Veroni's. They were monotonous meals: all dish tasting of one sauce whose eternal basis was preserved tomato; but t sauce of safety lent them savour; until the arrival of a certain dish cutlets narrowed again the limits of his dungeon.

It was raining outside as it always rained in those days. T curtains were drawn and the dinner-tray lay on the little tab between the red-shaded lamp and the cheerful fire. There we three cutlets in the dish, lapped by the usual sauce and gemmed wi bright green peas, so green that the colour suggested copper poisonin and the family at West Ham whom the little paragraphs are contin ally chronicling as having chosen that means of egress from a colo less world. His train of thought stopped at the idea of poison at t moment when his eyes were reading *Café d'Italie* on the edge of t dish—and, pushing the tray from him, he laid down his knife a fork. It was a startling idea. All Italians clan together, the ve waiter who brought him this was probably a member of the Mafia some other confraternity of assassins. In the kitchen of the *caf* in some archway *en route* what might not have happened to thc cutlets, to that sauce? And as he thought these things, the odour death asserted itself in the faintly acid steam above the tomato He turned the cutlets over with his fork, not that he had any furth thought of dinner, but he wondered which cutlet was salted with pinch of that fell salt. The housekeeper's cat roused him by mewi and patting his knee with her paws.

"Poor pussy," he said, "poor pussy then."

He liked the cat though it was a mere acquaintance of the last f

ays, which had been spent so much within doors. But in a case ke this—and he put the dish down at his feet.

The cat looked up once in astonishment and then put down its ead and began to eat the cutlet with rapid precision and an appear- nce of making the most of this streak of topsy-turvydom. After ie manner of cats she dragged each cutlet in turn from the dish to ie hearthrug to indulge a sportsmanlike imagination with the fiction a freshly-killed mouse. Coming back to the dish she lapped sauce nd gravy to their end, when she suffered herself to be turned out on the landing with unctuous purrings.

It was her last meal on earth. A solicitor's office door on the first oor had been left open by the cleaners. After a night's rest on its at she was seen to pass out of the house while the front step was eing cleaned, and a moment later she was a little limp rag of tabby r. A hansom turning the corner suddenly did this thing.

But of this Calverley knew nought, and when, having guiltily asked s housekeeper where pussy was that morning, he saw her put her ron to her eyes, he turned pale and his knee trembled as he sat.

"Don't tell me," he almost screamed, "if anything has happened. can never eat my breakfast if anything—I hate to hear of the fferings of animals."

And Mrs. Simcoe did not tell him.

On that day after a breakfast of potass and whiskey, Calverley sat his window until he saw Verriatt of the Colonial Office passing wn Russell Row. Then he unbolted and unlocked his doors, osed them carefully and ran out. He greeted Verriatt with strange easure. and secured his escort as far as Whitehall. His eyes grew oist as they walked side by side. This human companionship ected him so deeply.

From Whitehall he took cab for the Army and Navy Stores, where th a grocery catalogue before him, he made a list of biscuits and ned things. Anything that could be securely tinned or potted or ttled with seals over the stoppers so that a man might be the first let them see light, Calverley bought. He provisioned his fortress a month, and at that he stayed, for he could not bear to think of re than one month of durance.

When he had seen all his parcels brown-papered and twined, scend into a deep packing case and headed up with hammering of ils, he sneaked down the steps and walked towards home, choosing main thoroughfares of Victoria Street and Parliament Street. He ant to have lunched at the *Cheshire Cheese*, but the cowardly fit s on him, and he ate an underdone steak at a Piccadilly restaurant ose entrance was not up a dark passage.

He was picking his steps over the crossing at Piccadilly Circus, en a sharp tap sounded upon his silk hat. Someone had taken a erty with him—some ribald had thrown something from one of the usand windows. He flushed to his hat brim, but a glance at a shop

window showed him his hat undisturbed, and he walked haughti on without deigning to look up for the gratification of his assailar In Oxford Street he swung himself on to a passing bus. Russell Rc was empty, and he was soon in the secure heights of his chambe As he sank into his fireside chair, his hat rolled off from the table edg

When he picked it up, he saw a neat round hole drilled clear through the top of it, and his trembling hand touched another hc in the side.

Then he knew that in broad daylight his head had been the targ for an assassin's aim, luckily a faulty one. But in Piccadilly Circu —and how near, how near!—a slug from an air-gun had done th All the outside world became one ambush to him, and he cower from the very window as he sat.

When Bothwellhaugh pushed his barrel through the window a the Regent fell out of the saddle, all men heard the bang of the piec and looking up, saw the smoke curling under the eaves. But w should say, if a man died by this silent stroke, from what window t little death pellet came?

And Calverley went to the door again and tried the lock and sh the bolt, and coming back threw himself on his sofa with tears his eyes.

III.

After a week of the life Calverley began to lead after the startli incident of the hat, he was in a condition of nervous fever. He l his nerve as a man loses it who has missed his footing crag-climbi and has saved himself on a giddy verge. And Calverley's nerve c not come back. He grew yellow and bilious, for a diet of biscu and eggs and spiced and potted foods does not brace a man w lives in an armchair. He read little scraps of books and left th littering the room; he smoked constantly, and made black coffee w a nickel-plated patent.

He wrote to Firebras at Hampstead, telling him the story w much pitiful jocularity—he wrote again and besought his advice—; wrote again begging him for old friendship's sake to come—a Firebras did not answer. There was no other man; and Calverl lying on his sofa, huddled and weary, cursed the discriminating exc siveness which he had stroked and patted oft-times and oft.

There was a story in one of the books of a man in Italy who saic hot word, and, fearing a knife, fled to a little tower, and, so that lived, was content to live a long life alone, drawing up his food in basket; and in the evening of his life his fears were slaked, and th was a day when he stepped out to feel the strange green turf bef the threshold. It was then the waiting knife came round the corr between him and the door.

When Calverley read that he yearned for the pavement and sent the
usekeeper out to buy another bolt for his door—a larger one.
The house was an old one and the fortunate fellow was able to
se the old shutters by night, but a skylight above troubled him
atly until he had climbed on to the tiles with the housekeeper's
os and found his roof inaccessible from the lower house next
or.
The idea of a cigar and a stroll upon the tiles struck him that
ning. All ideas now made him fretful, but he went, and whined
he went. The bright moonlight and the sense of exalted security
thed him somewhat; he leaned over the grimy parapet at the side
let the ash of his cigar drop down into Ducie Street. He could
r the rumble of the traffic in Holborn, but Ducie Street was
oty. He took a turn along the narrow way between the two slopes
he tiles—a fisherman's walk, two steps and overboard into Russell
v—and came back to his parapet. And now Ducie Street was no
ger empty. A man was leaning against the railings at the corner
man in a high silk hat. But the long dark hair that fell beneath
nd the whole cut of the cloak left no doubt as to his nationality.
man was a foreigner, and the high silk hat, assumed doubtless as
isguise, could not hide him from the terror-quickened eyes of
erley.
His wrongs, his unmerited sufferings (he had forgotten the review
his time), his long fast from human fellowship came upon him
lenly and met the constant current of instinct which prompts the
lishman to aim at a mark. The two together swept Mr. Calverley
is knees on the roof. He softly loosened half a brick, a moss
usted brick, and dropped it with angry precipitation upon the hat
he lurker below.
The hat fell dinted on the pavement. Its owner picked it up—
battered thing—and hurried away towards Holborn.
Lex talionis—a hat for a hat," said Calverley bitterly.
ome one was knocking at his door. The owner of the hat had
otless come—red-hot—to expostulate. The owner therefore was a
ger, not one of his foes. Calverley drew a full breath of relief as
astened to unbar it. For once he had been wrong; he had not
ped a brick on the hat of an Italian murderer, but had been
y of a shocking joke at the expense of some strange gentleman's
er, as any light-hearted fool might have done. It was a respite
the strange horrors that beset his path. He felt a thrill of joyful
vship with his kind, and could hardly open the bolts quickly
gh to receive the curses of the owner of the hat. But when
ot it open there stood no indignant hat-owner, cursing and
ioning, only Firebras, calm and sympathetic, with a railway rug
e hand and Bradshaw and a bundle of Calverley's letters in the
.
've been away; only just back, and I came on just as I am."

Calverley, the colour of a well-washed blanket, drew his friend i and shut the door.

"I'm hunted," he said. "I've just dropped a brick on the villain head and smashed his hat in. I thought I'd made a mistake when heard you knock, and that, whoever it was, had come up to threate proceedings. But not he—he made off. If he hadn't been lurkir there for some evil purpose would a man take half a brick and go c without a word? Now would he? And I've enraged him more tha ever. No Italian can afford to lose his only good hat."

"I don't quite follow you," said Firebras, "and your letters; b come, tell me all you've done."

And Calverley did tell him, sitting restlessly upright on the edge his cane chair while Firebras sat there with half-shut eyes and a smi of recognition for each incident. To the very end of the narrati Calverley clung to his own poor little fiction of not believing in th sort of thing, but Firebras's grey calm eyes seemed to see through much and with so large a sympathy, that at last Calverley broke dov and began to cry in his chair, and put his elbows on the table a told Firebras what he had not yet had courage to tell himself.

"I may bolt myself in and shutter up and stop every hole in th stuffy prison," he wailed, "but, Firebras, I don't mind telling y there's something I can't keep out, do what I may. Look how r cheeks have fallen in. Look at my ribs; I'm wasting away. I've g fire here and there. You know when I read that poem of Rossett here at night I could fancy that some beggar is melting my image wax and chuckling as it melts."

"*Maleficium*, eh?" said Firebras, nodding sympathetically as Calverley were describing the symptoms of indigestion.

"And there's something sits with me at all hours, especially night. My nerves are all gone. Why, last night I had to move th skull, the one I had that came out of the peat bed in Chat Mo I couldn't bear it on the bracket, and so I shoved it into the draw there, and even then I knew it was grinning."

"Did you ever notice Merlino's eyes?" said Firebras, thoughtful "One is higher than the other. I never like that kind of man to lo at me."

"Then you think it's the evil eye. Would it do me any good go to Australia? Can't you make an image of him? I wouldn't mi sticking pins into it."

"You forget he has the start of us," said Firebras, and he went making pencil dots and dashes on an old envelope, brooding over as if he were planning the environment of a soul, while Calver watched him anxiously, lighting his pipe again and again.

At last Firebras rose up and strode the room with his chin on breast.

"Cheer up," he said, "I'll pull you through if you'll pull yo nerves together. To-night I've no traps with me and couldn't

iem. To-morrow I must be at the Bank about some transfers in an state I'm trustee of, but I'll be here in the evening, and we'll try a ounter-spell. You take a long walk, and——"

"I can't," said Calverley, pitifully.

"Then begin the day with a cold douche and dumb-bells. Drink othing but soda water, and don't smoke or eat anything but a little read and fruit. Your nerves are all anyhow."

"Yes"—Calverley forced a smile—"I really think they are."

"Why not walk down to the Club with me? It will do you good have a chat with your fellow-creatures, and," Firebras added with e faintest shadow of a smile, "you are sure to find someone coming our way who will see you home."

IV.

AZED, as a man suddenly coming from the darkness into strong nlight, Calverley went back to the world of three weeks ago. He d supper at the Club, and in the joy of reunion with his kind, and ospective release of Firebras, he listened with smiles of encouragement while a very young man entertained him with (1) the well-known ment of the Scilly Islanders and their washing, (2) a familiar story the defrauded dog who went straight out and fetched a policeman, d (3) a venerable jest that recalled the fifth form room in which lverley had first heard it. Leaving the young man happy in that had made conversation, he turned to his next neighbour and sually asked news of Merlino and his operetta of "Paula and rginius."

"Merlino's gone for good."

Calverley thought of Firebras and queried the statement.

"Yes, gone yesterday morning. Uncle, a rich hotel-keeper in the cino, makes Merlino his heir, leaves him business and a million nes to carry it on with. Do better at that than he did with Paula d what's-his-name, eh?"

"Is that really a fact?" said Calverley.

"Why, did he owe you anything? Abuse his hotel in paragraphs ne doesn't cash up, or praise the cookery at the other place. Hotel-eping is the only industry in the Ticino. Ever heard the story of the olution there, and the crowd, marching on the Town Hall singing Marseillaise, were dispersed by somebody shouting 'Waiter!' eryone answered the Italian for 'Coming sir!' and——"

But Calverley had gone home, unescorted.

* * * * *

Firebras is a very serious man. I do not know what craft he ows or what he does with his life. To play the violin or fence with rapier, you must give up some hours daily. Firebras gives a life

to wanderings about the earth, to look at its ways through half-shu eyes, and reading books that dead and gone people wrote, knowing that Firebras would read and appreciate. He is a very wise man, and he talks of things that no one else speaks of because they cling somewhere about all our hearts.

He came to Calverley's rooms at nine in the evening, full o sympathy and carrying a great gladstone which Calverley eyed as if i were timed for a doorstep explosion. Firebras noticed at once the change in his friend.

"You look better already," he said, unbuckling the straps of the bag. "I've got everything here to work the counter-spell, and I've found all out about Merlino. And I've not the slightest hesitation now in putting all my knowledge at your service. He's a bigger rascal than I thought. . . . 27A, Maryborough Mansions, is his address It's a garret in an old Soho house converted into flats, and Merlino keeps the only key . . . living by himself, cooking macaroni and opera tunes. I believe I am strong enough."

Calverley was strong enough to laugh ungratefully.

"I think . . . I think it's been my undue sensitiveness to trifles, he said. "I really feel all right now. What did you propose to do?" he asked.

But Firebras was staring into the hot coals. There was a lon silence. Calverley lighted a cigar, let it out, lit it again and the added——

"And besides, Merlino has gone to Italy; and——"

"And so now you think you have fancied it all," answered Firebra slowly, and he got up and strapped up the gladstone very tightl and sharply . . . "Well, good-night, Calverley; you're a man of wonderful imagination. You ought to be a war correspondent."

Calverley laughed light-heartedly, but when Firebras went he bolte the door after him, from three weeks' habit, and then unbolted it again with a blush and an apologetic shrug.

IT WAS CONSIDERABLY PAST FIVE O'CLOCK WHEN OUR LOVERS FOUND THEMSELVES BACK AT THE COTTAGE.

THE ARGOSY.

OCTOBER, 1894.

THE GREY MONK.

By T. W. Speight, Author of "The Mysteries of Heron Dyke."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE COUNSEL OF EXPERIENCE.

THERE is no knowing how long Sir Gilbert Clare might have kept on expecting the arrival of his daughter-in-law had it not been for a visit which Mrs. Tew paid him in the course of the day following Luigi's departure from the Chase.

Late in the afternoon of the previous day Mrs. Clare's maid had arrived at Maylings in a cab, bringing with her a note from her mistress, in which the canon's widow was informed that although the writer had returned from Italy, it was not her present intention to again take up her abode in the house which Sir Gilbert Clare had so generously placed at her disposal. Would Mrs. Tew, therefore, be at the trouble to hand over to her maid whatever personal belongings she had left behind when she went abroad—a request with which that lady had at once complied. In answer to her questions the maid could tell her nothing, except that the fly in which she and her mistress were being conveyed from the railway station had been met and stopped by Mr. Lewis Clare; that Mrs. Clare had thereupon alighted and had accompanied him into the *Crown and Cushion* hotel (at a window of which she, Lucille, had caught a glimpse of Captain Verinder), and that she was still there, awaiting Lucille's return from Maylings.

From all this it was clear to Sir Gilbert that he need no longer expect the coming of his daughter-in-law. She had been intercepted by Rispani and Verinder, had been told of what had come to light during her absence, and, like her nephew, had preferred an

ignominious flight to facing the man she had so bitterly wronged. Evidently she had no plea to urge in extenuation of what she had done. There was nothing for it but to accept her guilt as proved, and to try to forget that any such person had ever intruded her presence upon him.

As we have seen, Lady Pell had long ago penetrated Everard Lisle's love secret, and of late certain signs which, to any eyes less experienced than hers, would have passed unnoted, seemed to indicate that the time had come when he need no longer delay his confession, but might with some measure of confidence ask for that which she felt nearly sure would not be denied him. Many were the opportunities she contrived for throwing the young people together, but day after day went by and the all-important question still remained unasked. At length she began to lose patience with Lisle. "Who would have dreamt that so much timidity lay at the back of that confident bearing and resolute face? Oh, to be a man and afraid of a girl's No! Your laggard courage evidently needs whipping up, my good sir, and mine shall be the hand to do it!"

On the Saturday she said to Sir Gilbert: "I have several times promised myself a visit to the ruins of Dunarvon Castle, but something has always intervened. Now, however, I will put it off no longer, or the last of the fine weather will be gone. You placed the wagonette at my disposal whenever I might choose to avail myself of it, so I shall take Miss Thursby and Mrs. Tew with me, and, as we can't very well dispense with the services of a gentleman on such an occasion, I want you to spare me Mr. Lisle for the whole of Monday."

"Certainly, Louisa. Utilise his services in whatever way may seem best to you."

"I am quite aware that it is not a bit of use asking you to join our little party."

"Not the slightest use, Louisa. As you are aware, I never go anywhere."

"I can't help saying, Gilbert, that it would be better for you in many ways if you did go somewhere. A man in your position, and with your duties, has no business to make a recluse of himself."

"I don't dispute your dictum, only, as it happens, we are not all made after the same pattern. Several years ago the world had become such a tiresome place to me that henceforward I determined to see as little of it as possible. It may have been a weak resolve to come to, but, such as it was, I have kept it, and I am afraid that now I am far too old to change."

Everard Lisle could almost have gone down on his knees to Lady Pell when told of the good fortune in store for him. He had already been to Dunarvon and knew of the lovely woodland walks by which the ruins were surrounded, and that he and Ethel should be able to spend a whole autumn afternoon among them seemed almost to

much happiness to be possible. That Lady Pell would afford them ample opportunities for wandering away by their two selves he did not doubt. What if he were to seize the occasion to break the rule of silence he had hitherto imposed on himself, and try for the second time to win where he had failed once already? Well, he would be guided by circumstances. Should a propitious moment offer itself, he would not let it slip, but if not, then would he wait a little longer.

Sir Gilbert in person saw them off. This morning, or so it seemed o her ladyship, he looked more cheerful and in better spirits than she had seen him in since the affair of the strong-room, now a week ago. "He will get over the worst of it in time, as we do with all our troubles," she told herself: "only, he will carry the scar of it to his dying day."

A drive of a dozen miles brought our little party to their destination, whereupon Lady Pell issued her instructions. The first thing to do was to explore the ruins under the conduct of the authorised guide.

After that would come luncheon in a room in the custodian's cottage, which was frequently utilised for that purpose. They had brought their own hamper of good things with them, and their own man to wait upon them. After which it would be time enough to decide how the rest of the day should be spent.

At the end of an hour, having seen all there was to be seen, Lady Pell paid and dismissed the guide; then, in an aside to Mrs. Tew, she said: "I want you to engage Miss Thursby for a few minutes while I have a little private talk with Mr. Lisle."

The canon's widow nodded, and presently the young people found themselves drawn apart, to all appearance in a quite fortuitous way.

"If it won't be troubling you too much, Mr. Lisle," said Lady Pell, "I think I should like to take another peep at that old dungeon about which the guide told us that gruesome legend. Such places have a peculiar but quite absurd fascination for me."

Having taken a second peep into the dungeon, her ladyship led the way up the winding stairs which brought them out on the leads of the keep. "Now that we have got rid of that tiresome guide, one can enjoy the view and be left to find out its most interesting features for oneself."

Lisle did not answer; he was wondering what had become of Ethel and why they couldn't all four be enjoying the view from the keep.

"If I had known that Dunarvon was half as picturesque as it is," said Lady Pell presently, "I would certainly have got Miss Thursby to bring her drawing materials with her. There are charming sketches to be made from half-a-dozen different points of view."

"Would it not be possible to come to Dunarvon on some future day and rectify the omission?" queried Everard with the most innocent air imaginable.

"Come again another day? Impossible!" cried her ladyship. "My time at the Chase is nearly up. A few more days, and

Miss Thursby and I will be winging our flight elsewhere. And high time too, in my opinion." She was looking full at Lisle, and he felt himself colouring under her regard.

"Why do you say—'and high time too,' Lady Pell? I—I fail to understand you." It was many a year since his cheeks had burnt as hotly as they did at that moment.

"I should have thought my words were plain enough to be understood by anybody. However, since it seems that nothing else will do, I will deal with you still more plainly." Laying a hand for a moment on his sleeve, she said: "Everard Lisle, you are in love with Ethel Thursby—and small blame to you either! Ah! you needn't start. I've known it all along. Of course you thought, as most of your sex do in such cases, that nobody could see what was the matter with you; whereas to me—not that I set myself up as being cleverer than other people—it was as plain as a pikestaff. Very well. Perceiving what ailed you, I went out of my way to make opportunities for you to be together, and indeed, in a quiet way, did all I could to help you. And with what result, pray? Simply none at all. Week after week has gone by, and here you are, to all seeming, not a bit nearer what you are dying to possess than you were when I arrived at Withington Chase. I am disappointed in you, Everard Lisle."

Her ladyship's somewhat lengthy diatribe had afforded Everard time to recover his self-possession. "Lady Pell," he returned with some emotion, "that in you I have all along had a friend I have felt assured in my own mind, but I must confess I did not think that the feelings with which I regard Miss Thursby had betrayed themselves so plainly on the surface as they seem to have done. However, you have surprised my secret, and I am confident it could not be in better keeping. You deem me dilatory, in that I have so long delayed putting my fortune to the touch; but there is one circumstance I may be permitted to urge in extenuation of which I feel assured you have no knowledge. Six months ago I proposed to Miss Thursby and was rejected. Can you wonder, then, if I hesitate and seem to shilly-shally before venturing to run the same risk again?"

"That is something which I never so much as suspected," replied her ladyship. "Yes, that certainly puts a somewhat different complexion on the affair. But I would not let myself be too much discouraged by it if I were you, Mr. Lisle."

"I don't think I let it discourage me overmuch," said Everard with a smile. "Only, as I said before, it lies at the back of my apparent hesitation."

"Then take the advice of an old woman who has seen something of the world, and hesitate no longer."

"Ah! then you think I have a chance of success?" exclaimed Lisle with a sudden glow which seemed to irradiate him from head to foot. "You have seen something—you know something?"

"Not quite so fast, my young friend, if you please," said her

ladyship in her dryest accents. "I know nothing—absolutely nothing. No whisper in connection with yourself and her has ever passed Miss Thursby's lips to me. As for what I have seen, or may have fancied I have seen, that is a matter of no moment and concerns no one but myself. Still, I say to you as I said before: were I in your place I should hesitate no longer. Are you prepared to seize the first occasion that offers itself?"

"After what has passed between us, I should indeed be a coward not to do so."

"Very well then, the needful opportunity shall be given you after luncheon this afternooon."

CHAPTER XL.

"LOVE TOOK UP THE HARP OF LIFE."

EVERARD LISLE seemed to tread on air as he walked beside Lady Pell to the custodian's cottage, where they found Mrs. Tew and Ethel awaiting them. Luncheon was ready and they at once sat down to it. They made a very merry little party, Everard in especial being in the gayest of spirits.

"Now, what I should recommend you young people to do," said her ladyship by-and-by, "is to go in search of the Haunted Pool, about which the guide was telling us this morning. He said it was not above a mile away, and, in any case, the woods themselves are most lovely just now. As for Mrs. Tew and I, we shall have a couple of comfortable chairs taken out into the shade of yonder oak, and there have a quiet gossip to ourselves. And don't forget that tea will be ready at five o'clock to the minute."

We may be sure that Lisle and Ethel were by no means loth to carry out her ladyship's behest, and presently they were lost to view among the green shadows of the wood. Lady Pell gazed after them with a well-satisfied smile, but it was with a sigh that the canon's widow followed their retreating figures. "Oh, to be young again and in love!" she said, hardly witting that she spoke aloud.

"And have all the troubled record of our lives to go through again," said her ladyship. "For my part no such desire ever enters my mind. All things considered, I'm pretty well content to be as I am."

Perhaps for the moment she failed to remember that her life had many compensations denied to poor Mrs. Tew.

It was one of those lovely October days which make a golden bridge between summer and winter. The woods were clothed with their richest garments—a kaleidoscope of gorgeous tints, albeit the vesture of decay. The dry leaves rustled under their feet, and little splashes of colour kept dropping round them as they went. Here and there a rabbit peered cautiously at them for a moment, showed

a flash of white and was gone. Somewhere out of sight a robin was fluting a monody to the dying year. They walked on for some time in silence; Everard seemed to have left all his gaiety behind him. There was something about his changing moods to-day which Ethel failed to understand. She had known all along that his love had never altered or varied in the slightest, and of late her own heart had whispered its secret to her in accents she could no longer mistake. More than once during the last few weeks she had felt nearly sure Everard was on the point of saying that which, almost unknown to herself, she was secretly longing to hear; but the propitious moment had gone by and he had not spoken, and not improbably it was the vague sense of disappointment that had crept over her at such times which had first served to open her eyes to the truth as regarded herself.

But somehow to-day she had no prevision of what was so imminent. Not even now that she had come with him for a solitary woodland ramble. For that day at least he seemed to have absolved himself from all serious thoughts, from all matters of moment, and to be transformed for the time into the similitude of a laughing, light-hearted school-boy. She could not know—how should she—that it was her presence, that it was the privilege of being able to spend several consecutive hours in her sweet company, which had thus had power to metamorphose him almost beyond his knowledge of himself.

From the summit of the keep he had caught a silvery gleam of water in a hollow no great distance away. It was probably the Haunted Pool, about which the guide had told them, and lay darkling in its forest hollow, with a fringe of bulrushes, and outside that a margin of soft turf that was pleasant to the feet. For all it had the name of being haunted, there was nothing weird or uncanny about the place, but rather an air of sweet solitariness as though of one of Nature's temples, sacred to the shy creatures of the wood, upon which for any human foot to intrude was to break some mystic spell.

For a few moments Lisle and Ethel stood drinking in the silent beauty of the scene. Then said Everard,

"Suppose we rest here awhile, 'the world forgetting, by the world forgot.'" Speaking thus he led the way to the trunk of a tree, blown down in some tempest years before, which had been left unheeded where it had fallen.

And now at length had come the moment so long looked forward to, so long delayed, so long regarded with apprehension, but now at last seized on with a gladness which he himself felt to be closely allied to audacity. For events might yet make a mockery of his gladness and prove it to have no better foundation than a certain oracular utterance on the part of an old lady who believed herself possessed of a gift for seeing farther into a millstone than her neighbours. All this might come to pass of course, and yet he was not at all dismayed. To-day he felt lifted above the common world. For the time he breathed "an ampler ether, a diviner air."

Nevertheless, it was in very commonplace terms that he began what he had to say.

"Do you know, Lady Pell quite startled me as she and I were standing together on the keep before luncheon." He was not looking at Ethel, but leaning forward and punching holes in the turf with the ferrule of his walking-stick.

"I should have thought your nerves proof against anything Lady Pell might have to say to you," answered Ethel smilingly.

"She gave me to understand that her stay at the Chase was drawing to a close, and that in a very little while she and you would be winging your flight elsewhere."

There was a moment's silence, and then Ethel said: "It was a very natural announcement, and I cannot see what there was in it to startle you."

"That is because you look at it from one point of view, and I from another. To you it means fresh faces and other scenes—in short, a change, probably more or less welcome after the quiet and monotony of existence at Withington Chase."

He paused. Ethel was quite aware that he was waiting for her to say: "And from your point of view what does it mean?" By this she needed no one to tell her what his reply would be. Everything had been revealed to her as in a flash, and she marvelled at her blindness. And now the point for her to decide, and that on the instant, was whether she should, or should not, ask him that simple-seeming question, which she felt would but be the precursor to one of infinitely more significance on his part, from answering which there would be no possible escape for her. And in what terms was she prepared to answer it? Her heart-throbs seemed to deafen her and her mind was torn by a conflict of emotions, among which, however, one claimed predominance over the others. She knew and owned to herself that she loved him. Then in the silence a voice spoke. "And from your point of view, Mr. Lisle, what does Lady Pell's announcement mean?" It was as though some force within her had compelled her to put the question in her own despite.

"It means," began Everard, and he paused for an instant as if his breath had suddenly failed him—"it means more, far more than I could tell you in many words." Neither of them had been looking at each other, but Lisle now left off his employment of punching holes in the turf, and drawing himself up, he turned on Ethel a face all aglow with the emotion of the moment.

"When you quit the Chase," he went on, "I shall lose that which to me is the most precious object on earth, and who shall say whether I shall ever find it again? Ethel, on that April day which now seems so long ago that I could fancy it pertained to some prior state of existence, I told you that I loved you, and asked you to become my wife. Your answer was, that you had no love to give me, and that you could never marry me. I took my dismissal and went—

indeed, there was nothing else left me to do—not knowing whether I should ever see you again. Then, when, one morning, months afterwards, I came suddenly upon you in one of the garden-paths at the Chase, it seemed as if the gates of Paradise must have opened, and that you had come down its golden stairs to meet me face to face. And the same instant my love for you, which I had locked up in the innermost chamber of my heart as a priceless treasure once more flooded all my being with a rapture of hope. Ethel, that hope has not yet deserted me. If I have not spoken before, it has been because I feared to startle you, because I trembled lest my audacity might be the cause of my losing what I possessed already—your friendship—and yet give me nothing in return. But now the day of timid counsels is over, and at the risk of losing everything I cast silence to the winds. You *must* hear me, you *must* know all, let your sentence be what it may."

He poured forth the words with a fervour with which few who knew him would have credited the ordinarily quiet, self-contained and somewhat self-repressed Everard Lisle. They were both still seated on the trunk of the fallen tree, and he now drew a little closer to Ethel, who, all this time, had been gazing straight before her with a strangely rapt expression on her face.

"So now again to-day," he went on, "I am going to ask you the self-same question that I asked you on your birthday——"

"Stay! Do not speak another word till you have heard what I have to say."

She had turned and was facing him, the delicate roses of her cheeks somewhat blanched, but her eyes shining clear and full like twin stars of morning. There was that in the way she spoke which compelled attention. Everard was struck dumb. Man though he was, his heart fluttered like a frightened bird. What was he about to be told? That he was too late?—that some rival had been beforehand with him? Where was all his happy confidence now? It seemed to him as if his face had turned grey and old. A shiver went through him from head to foot.

"Come," said Ethel, "let us walk awhile. I have much to tell you."

She rose, and, like an automaton, he did the same. They turned and, side by side, began to pace the turfy margin of the pool. Ethel did not at once break the silence. Many emotions were at work within her, and she wanted to assure herself that she had them well under control before she spoke again.

"Mine is a strange story, Mr. Lisle, as you will at once admit when I have told it you. You know me, and the world knows me, by the name of Ethel Thursby, but that is not my real name. What *that* is no one knows. Neither does anyone know who were my parents, where I was born, nor, indeed, who I am at all."

Therewith she went on to tell him all those facts in connection

with her early history with which the reader is already familiar, beginning with the tragic death of the woman who had passed herself off as her mother on board the *Pandora*, leading up through their adoption of her as their niece by the two Miss Thursbys, to her discovery of the truth as told her in Matthew Thursby's letter on her nineteenth birthday.

It was with growing wonder and interest that Lisle listened to her as, step by step, she unfolded the details of her story.

"I hope you do not for a moment imagine that all this which you have just told me can make a shadow's difference in my love for you," he eagerly began almost before the last words had left her lips.

"But I have still another confession to make," she said, breathing the words, as it were, on the wings of a sigh. "Let me finish, please, before you say anything more."

Then came the confession which the truth that dwelt in her forced from her lips, although it was like tearing her heart to have to make it.

"Mr. Lisle, I have been engaged once already."

"Ah!"—with a swift indrawing of his breath. It was undoubtedly a stab.

"I was young, inexperienced, romantic," resumed Ethel, not allowing herself to notice his exclamation. "He was good-looking and plausible, and he persuaded me into fancying that I loved him, and after a time we became engaged. But, indeed, it was all a foolish fancy, for in my heart I never really cared for him. Fortunately I discovered the sort of man he was before it was too late. He had sought me in the belief that I was an heiress, and when he found I was nothing of the kind, his only thought was in what way he could most readily break with me. But no such action on his part was called for, for meanwhile it had come to my knowledge that he was already engaged to someone else, to whom he had behaved with a baseness and a heartlessness which seem almost beyond belief. From that moment all was at an end between us. I felt like a prisoner when his fetters are struck off and he is told that he is free. How deep was my thankfulness that my eyes had been mercifully opened in time, I alone can ever know."

Lisle had listened like one devouring her every word, but even before she had come to an end he drew a deep breath of relief. Whomsoever this man might be, she had never really cared for him, her heart had never been touched, he had her own assurance to that effect, and for him, Everard Lisle, that was enough. It was merely one of those lessons of experience which, in one shape or another, we all of us have to learn, only she happily had been spared those bitter consequences which so many of us are called upon to drain to the lees.

If, as a lesson, it served no other purpose, it would at least teach

her to discern and appreciate the difference between a spurious love and one that was rooted in the heart's inmost core.

"Since you have chosen to tell me these things," he said, "I can but accept and value them as so many proofs of your confidence, but they weigh with me not so much as the lightest snowflake. They have not moved me by a single hair-breadth from the ground I stood on before, and now, at last, you must listen to what else I have to say. You have no longer any excuse for not doing so. Ethel, answer me once again the question I put to you on your birthday, only this time—this time—let your answer be a different one! Will you be my wife?"

They had come to a halt—why, neither of them could have told—and somehow both her hands found themselves imprisoned in his She did not try to release them, but her face was still averted and the marble of her neck and throat was flushed with tenderest rose.

"Speak, dearest—have you not one word for me?" he pleaded.

Then she turned upon him two darkly shining eyes which seemed the dwelling-place of that great mystery whose other name is love.

"And can you," she said, each syllable punctuated by a heart-throb —"nay, is it even possible, after what I have just told you, that you should still care for one who is nothing more than a waif—who as a wife would come to you parentless, nameless, dowerless? Consider. Take time to think. Do not answer me now, unless——"

"Do not answer you now!" broke in Everard impetuously. "When then should I answer you? Oh, my love—my love—how little you know me! This is my one and only answer."

An instant later she was locked in his arms.

CHAPTER XLI.

SIR GILBERT'S STRANGE EXPERIENCE.

It was considerably past five o'clock before our lovers found themselves back at the cottage, where Lady Pell and Mrs. Tew were awaiting their arrival in order to have tea brought in. When it was over Lady Pell drew Ethel aside.

"Well, my dear, and so he has summoned up courage to speak at last," she said. "I have seen what was coming for a long time, but I certainly thought him somewhat dilatory in bringing matters to a climax. However, all's well that ends well. I congratulate you most heartily. I approve your choice, and so I am sure, will Sir Gilbert when I tell him. Don't say anything now. You and I will have a long talk together in the morning."

Then while the horses were being brought round, she contrived to have a few words with Everard.

"So you have taken an old woman's advice, I find. Of one thing

I am quite sure, that you will never have cause to repent having done so. You are a fortunate fellow. You have secured a treasure. Indeed, I'm far from sure that she's not a long way too good for you."

"There I quite agree with you, Lady Pell. Where, indeed, should we find a man worthy of her? But is not that a very good reason why Miss Thursby should have condescended to accept me? We should always try to improve our fellow-creatures where improvement is needed. And that in my case she will find ample scope for her efforts, no one knows better than myself."

He spoke gravely enough, but there was a lurking smile in his eyes which Lady Pell did not fail to note.

"You men have quite a wonderful gift for preaching one doctrine before marriage and its exact opposite after. *Then* you discover that it is yourselves who are perfection and your poor wives who are deficient in this, that or the other quality which you never seemed to take account of before. But it has always been so, and I suppose it always will be."

She was on the point of turning away.

"One moment, Lady Pell," said Everard. "I have not yet told you how deeply grateful I am for the advice you gave me this morning. To that, in a great measure, I owe my present happiness. It gave me just the impulse I needed; it was the spur to urge me forward on the road I ought to go. My sincerest thanks will be yours to the last day of my life."

He was earnest enough now, there could be no mistake on that score.

"Wait till you have been floundering in the quicksands of matrimony for half-a-dozen years and then maybe you will tell a different tale," laughed Lady Pell.

Evening had closed in by the time our party reached the Chase. It was Trant in person, and not one of the footmen, who opened the door for them. He was evidently perturbed; so much so, in fact, that the knot of his white tie had worked itself round under his left ear without his being aware of it. Lady Pell saw at a glance that something was amiss. "What is it, Trant," she asked quickly. "Sir Gilbert——?" Something rose in her throat, but her eyes asked the question her lips refused to finish.

"Sir Gilbert, my lady, is not very well; nothing to be frightened at, if I may take the liberty of saying so," he made haste to add. "If your ladyship will allow me," he went on in a lower voice, "I would like to tell you what I know of the affair before you see Sir Gilbert."

Lady Pell at once led the way to the anteroom. The butler opened the door, bowed her in and followed.

"All morning Sir Gilbert was shut up in his study as usual," began Trant. "At luncheon his appetite was very poor, but he seemed tolerably cheerful. At six o'clock, after I had taken him a glass of

Madeira and a biscuit, he went into the hall, put on his soft hat, lighted a cigar and went for a stroll on the terrace, and about half-an-hour later, happening to look through the dining-room window, I saw him going slowly down the steps towards the lower grounds. By this the evening was getting quite dusky. It might have been a quarter of an hour, or twenty minutes later, when I heard the library bell rung sharply. I hurried in and found Sir Gilbert lying back in his easy-chair, looking quite dazed like—in fact, for half a minute or more he stared at me as if he didn't know who I was. 'You rang, sir,' says I. 'Eh?' says he. 'Did I ring, Trant? I don't remember ringing. And I don't remember how I got here. How did I get here, Trant?' shutting his eyes and pressing his hand to his forehead as if trying to bring back something he had forgotten. 'Don't know at all, sir,' says I. 'The bell rang and I answered it.' 'It's very strange, and I can't make it out at all,' says he. 'Be good enough to shut that window, and then bring me a little brandy in a liqueur glass; and, Trant, let me know when the ladies get back from their excursion.'"

Lady Pell had listened with growing impatience to the butler's somewhat long-winded narrative. "Thank you, Trant; I am much obliged to you for telling me this," she said. "You need not trouble to inform Sir Gilbert that I have returned. I will go to him at once. By-the-way, did you hint anything to Sir Gilbert about sending for a doctor?"

"It would have been as much as my place is worth," replied the butler with a solemn shake of the head. "And I shall be much obliged by your ladyship not saying anything about my having spoken to you."

A fire had been lighted in the library, for the autumn evenings were chilly, and Lady Pell found Sir Gilbert seated by it and looking much as usual. There was a small table, with a lamp on it near his elbow, and the *Times* newspaper was spread open on his knees.

"So you have got back safe and sound," he said in his most cheerful tones as she went forward. "Well, you have had a charming day and I hope you have enjoyed yourselves."

"Oh, most thoroughly. Didn't you find the house a little lonely without us?"

"Indeed I did—both lonely and dull. Dinner, I may tell you, I ordered for an hour later than usual; I felt sure you would come back famished after your long drive."

"And so we have; but you are not yet dressed."

"No—the fact is, I must ask you to excuse me at table to-day, I am slightly out of sorts and don't feel in the mood for company. Perhaps, later on, I may be inclined for a little music. Meanwhile Trant will not fail to look after me. And now I won't detain you a moment longer."

"Well, I shall come and look you up again as soon as dinner is over."

"Do so. By that time I may possibly have something to tell you."

Lady Pell scarcely waited for dinner to come to an end before she was back in the library. At the door she met Trant bringing out a tray containing the remains of Sir Gilbert's apology for a dinner. "Master seems better, much better, ma'am," he whispered as he passed her. Then she entered, seated herself comfortably near the fire, settled her glasses on her nose, deposited her ball of worsted on the hearthrug at her feet, and gave a preliminary click with her needles.

The Baronet sat gazing into the fire for a little space; then he cleared his voice and said: "Louisa, I have been the subject of a very strange experience to-day."

"Indeed, cousin?" responded her ladyship, in just that tone of sympathetic surprise which indicated that she was fully in touch with him. "But it is not the first strange experience you have had of late."

"No indeed," with a sigh. "But I will tell you all about it. Perhaps you may be able to suggest an explanation where I confess that at present I see none. Feeling somewhat lonely as the day wore on—so used have I become of late to seeing faces round me—and it being still too early to have the lamps lighted, I took a cigar, and having put on my hat and coat, went out for a stroll in the grounds. At first I confined myself to the terrace, but finding the air there rather chilly, after a time I went down the steps and began to pace the sheltered paths of the shrubbery on the lower level. I had finished my cigar—I am a very slow smoker—and in the shrubbery it had grown almost dark before I turned to go indoors. I was crossing that piece of sward on my way to the terrace steps, when I was seized with a sudden giddiness. Everything seemed to go round with me. Stumbling forward a step or two with outstretched hands, my knees gave way under me and I sank, rather than fell, forward on the turf and lost consciousness. When I came in some measure to myself, which must have been after a very few moments, I had a sense of being borne swiftly along in a pair of strong arms. Then, I could tell by the change of atmosphere that I was indoors, and a moment later I felt myself being laid gently down, while the arms that had carried me were withdrawn. And then—perhaps you will scarcely credit it—I seemed to feel a kiss pressed on my forehead—yes, on mine, the forehead of an old man of seventy-four! On the instant I opened my eyes, and there, clearly outlined by the flame of the burning logs on the hearth, I saw bending over me—whom or what think you?"

Thus directly appealed to, Lady Pell simply arched her eyebrows and shook her head as one wholly at a loss for an answer. In the

interest excited by her kinsman's narrative her hands, still holding her needles, lay idle on her lap.

"A robed and cowled figure," returned Sir Gilbert, "of whom I could discern little save its long grizzled beard."

"The Grey Monk!" ejaculated her ladyship in a whisper, touched for once with unaccustomed awe.

Sir Gilbert bowed his head in grave assent.

CHAPTER XLII.

SIR GILBERT'S THEORY.

Lady Pell sat looking at her kinsman for a little while in silence, waiting for him to resume his narrative, and it was not till she perceived that he had become oblivious of her presence and was on the point of lapsing into one of his brown studies, that she spoke.

"And what happened after that, cousin?" she asked, "that is to say, after you discovered that you had been brought indoors by the Grey Monk?"

Sir Gilbert, who came to himself with a little start when she began to speak, said: "I have no distinct consciousness of anything that followed till I found Trant standing over me, looking half scared out of his wits, and can only suppose that I must have fainted again. But that, although only for a space of two or three seconds, my eyes beheld a robed and cowled figure, I am as positive as that they behold you at this moment. That it was no hallucination, no piece of visual cheatery, I am firmly convinced."

Some people, in Lady Pell's place, might have said to Sir Gilbert "Yet, when others professed to have seen the Grey Monk, you treated their assertions with contempt, and would have it that they were the victims of a self-created illusion." But Lady Pell was too wise to venture any such observation. What she said was: "If you have told me this, cousin, with any idea that I might perhaps be able to furnish you with even a hint of some clue to the mystery, I must at once confess that your expectation has been wholly in vain. You yourself cannot possibly be more puzzled than I am."

"I hardly expected to hear you say otherwise," he remarked with a half sigh; and with that he again subsided into silence.

Lady Pell resumed her knitting, only to let her hands fall idle again at the end of a couple of minutes, while wholly unaware that she had done so.

Nothing was heard save the monotonous ticking of the clock on the chimney-piece and the hissing and sputtering of the half-burnt logs on the hearth.

"Louisa," spoke the Baronet suddenly in a voice which brought her ladyship back with a start from the land of visions in which she

had been mentally wandering—"Louisa, for the last hour or more a very singular idea has intruded itself persistently upon me; it is one which I have striven in vain to get rid of; indeed, so strongly does it hold me that it has almost assumed the proportions of an absolute conviction. It is—that if the cowl of the Grey Monk, who for weeks past has, so to speak, haunted the Chase, could be plucked back, there would stand revealed the features of none other than my eldest-born—my son so long believed to be dead—my hardly dealt-by Alec!"

"Goodness gracious! Cousin Gilbert, whatever made you get that notion into your head?" Lady Pell was staring at him as if she already detected symptoms of brain disease.

"It came into my mind, Louisa; I didn't put it there, and it refuses to be dislodged. But what if Alec be not really dead? What if the report that he was killed by that explosion was based on some error to which we have not the key? You remember the letter, written in an evidently disguised hand, which was found on my study table together with the key of the strong room?" Lady Pell nodded assent. "Who but Alec would have been in the position to point out the fact that the child—his child—who had died in infancy, was not a boy, but a girl? Who but Alec—my Alec—would have cared to press a kiss on an old man's brow?"

"There is certainly some feasibility in what you say," remarked her ladyship; "but if Alec were still alive he would surely have made the fact known to you long before now."

"You forget that he was a banished man—that it was a condition of the agreement between us that he should never set foot in England till he had my permission to do so. Heaven knows, permission would have been given long ago, because long ago all his early faults and follies were condoned and forgiven, had the faintest suspicion that he was still among the living ever found lodgment in my mind!"

"Even granting your assumption that Alec is still alive (and with all my heart I pray he may be), by what possible motive could he be influenced in coming back to the Chase and allowing himself to be seen by several people under the guise of the family spectre?"

"Ah, now you ask me a question which it is impossible to answer with any degree of certitude. Perhaps it had somehow come to his ears that I had adopted an impostor as my heir. In any case, I care not what may have been the motive which brought him back, if only it were he whose arms I felt about me three short hours ago. I am alone in the world, Louisa, alone and old. I have just been made the victim of a most shameful fraud, and if only, by some miracle, my eldest-born could be restored to me, I should feel that the remnant of my days had indeed been blessed to me far beyond my deserts!"

"Have you thought of any plan yet by which your theory can be tested and the mystery of the Grey Monk elucidated?"

"Not yet—not yet. But I generally lie awake for several hours in

the course of the night, and I shall have time to turn the matter over in my mind before morning."

That evening Sir Gilbert did not make his appearance in the drawing-room, but retired at an earlier hour than usual, to fall asleep almost immediately, but only to awake at the end of three hours and remain so till daybreak. During that wakeful period he formulated a certain theory in his mind which he determined to put to the proof immediately after breakfast.

The theory thus worked out by him, briefly stated, was to the following purport:

Some month or more had now gone by since the Grey Monk had so startled Bessie Ogden one evening on the terrace. So far as was known, that was the apparition's first appearance for upwards of twenty years. Now, it was quite evident to Sir Gilbert that if his son had been haunting the place for several weeks, it could only have been with the knowledge and connivance of one or more members of his household. How otherwise could Alec—supposing always that it were Alec—have been supplied with food and lodging? How else could he have had the run of the house at midnight, as the incident of the strong room proved him to have had? Now, Sir Gilbert's oldest dependent, and indeed the only one left whose memory could go back to so far a period; one, too, whose company had been much sought after by Alec as a youth, was Martin Rigg, the ex-keeper. Martin, who was now over sixty years old, had long been superannuated. Owing to a gunshot wound in his leg, the outcome of a poaching affray, he was a permanent cripple. He and his widowed daughter were now quartered in the old Tower, of which mention was made in the early part of this narrative as being the only remaining portion of the original Chase, the semi-ruinous rooms of which had been specially renovated and fitted up for their occupancy by Sir Gilbert.

Linking one thing with another in his memory, the Baronet, by the time he arose, had come to the conclusion that if anybody was more likely than another to be cognisant of his son's presence at the Chase, that person was Martin Rigg.

He breakfasted in his own room, but in order to relieve the anxiety which he knew Lady Pell would feel on his account, he wrote her a brief note and sent it by Trant, in which he told her that, this morning, he felt quite as well as he usually did, that he had a little special business to transact in the course of the forenoon, but that he would not fail to meet her at luncheon. Then after breakfast, he left the house by the back entrance and took his way through the spinny in the direction of the Tower.

Even at his slow rate of progression, a few minutes' walking brought him to it. Grey and stern as he always remembered it; it loomed before him with no visible sign of life about it. That, however, in no wise disturbed him. He did not doubt that he should find either

Martin or his daughter, or, more likely still, both of them at home. Going up to the door, which, though of modern make, was of oak and studded with huge square-headed nails, he rapped loudly at it with the ivory knob of his cane; but to his summons even when repeated, there came no response. Then he tried the handle, but only to find that the door was locked. Thus, at the very outset of the inquiry he had been about to enter upon, he found himself unaccountably baulked.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE ROOT OF THE MYSTERY.

For a few moments he stood fuming and glaring with angry eyes and bent brows at nothing in particular, while debating with himself what his next step ought to be. Evidently the first thing to do was to ascertain why the Tower was shut up and what had become of Rigg and his daughter. After considering the matter for a little space, he said aloud: "Nixon will be pretty sure to know. I'll go and question him."

Like Rigg, Nixon was another pensioned dependent of the house of Clare, and together with his wife, much younger than himself, filled the post of lodge-keeper at the main entrance to Withington Chase.

Across the park tramped the Baronet, a very unusual thing for him to do. The old lodge-keeper was at home, and it did not take Sir Gilbert long to elicit all that Nixon had to tell. It appeared that Martin Rigg had gone down to Yorkshire to attend the funeral of his only brother, and that his daughter had accompanied him. As to when they might be expected back, Nixon knew nothing.

"Do you happen to know," said Sir Gilbert, "whether Rigg has had anyone staying with him at the Tower of late—a visitor of any kind, I mean?"

Nixon shook his head. "Not to my knowledge, Sir Gilbert."

"And you are sure you heard nothing about any stranger being here?"

"I'm quite certain on that score, Sir Gilbert. And either Martin, or Dulcie would have been sure to speak of it if there had been."

As the Baronet walked back to the Chase he knew not what to think. So powerfully had his imagination been worked upon by the belief, which by this time had grown almost to a conviction, that his son was at the root of the mystery of the Grey Monk, and that, of all men, Rigg was the one to whom he must look to supply him with the key, that his mood was one of bitter disappointment.

After luncheon he told Lady Pell all about his morning's errand and its result.

In her own mind her ladyship had little or no faith in her kinsman's conviction that the Grey Monk was none other than John Alexander Clare, restored to life after some all but miraculous fashion when

there was every reason for supposing him to have died twenty long years before. She was not a believer in the improbable, although, if questioned, she would have felt bound to admit that even she had known cases where incidents of the most startling kind had evolved themselves out of lives to all seeming the most commonplace and prosaic.

In the course of the day she took an opportunity of informing Sir Gilbert of the engagement of Ethel Thursby and Everard Lisle. That the news afforded him genuine pleasure could not be doubted. "So I shall not lose my little girl after all!" he said. "That is indeed something worth hearing. She has become very dear to me, Louisa; I may tell you so now; and I should have felt the loss of her more, perhaps, than the occasion would have seemed to warrant, for she has contrived to steal her way into my affections in a quite unaccountable fashion. My old age is the sweeter for her presence. I am very glad that I am not to lose her."

"I shall make it my business to furnish her trousseau."

"And you may rely upon it that she shall not go to her husband without a *cadeau* from me. I suppose she will have no dowry?"

"Not a shilling, so far as I am aware. She is an orphan and was brought up by two maiden aunts who, till a little while ago, were quite comfortably off. Now, however, they have only just enough left to live upon."

"In that case I must see what I can do by way of increasing Lisle's salary. Of course when anything happens to poor Kinaby Lisle will at once step into his shoes. The furniture which is now at Maylings may as well be transferred to Elm Lodge for the young couple's use. They will make a well-matched pair, Louisa. As you know, I hold Lisle in very high regard, not merely because he happens to be the son of the man who saved my life, but by reason of his own fine qualities. How wide is the difference between him and young Rispani!"

Later in the day he took occasion to congratulate both the young folk, with the old-fashioned courtesy which became him so well, nor did he fail at dinner to drink to their health and happiness in a bumper of the rare old Madeira which was reserved for very special occasions. It was evident to everyone that the Baronet was in high good-humour, and that for the time at least he had succeeded in throwing off the gloom to which late events seemed to have hopelessly condemned him.

It was not till the second day after Sir Gilbert's visit to the Tower that Martin Rigg and his daughter got back home. Within an hour of his return he was summoned to proceed at once to the Chase, where Sir Gilbert received him in his study. Scarcely had he limped slowly into the room before Sir Gilbert, turning quickly upon him with bent brows and an assumption of his most minatory manner, said: "Rigg, how many days ago is it since you last saw my son, Mr. John Alexander Clare?"

That the keeper was utterly taken aback he himself would have

been the first to admit. He turned hot and then cold almost as quickly as it takes to write the words. He shifted his weight from one foot to the other and then back again, and so crushed his hard felt hat between his fingers that it was never fit to wear again. For a moment or two his gaze went up to a corner of the ceiling, only to be drawn irresistibly back to the stern face and deep-set eyes of the one man of whom he had ever stood in awe.

"When did I set eyes on Mr. Alec last, sir?" he stammered.

"You heard my question. I said, how many days is it—not years, mind you—since you saw my son last? Now, let me have no prevarication, Rigg. You know that is what I would never put up with either from you or anyone else. I have a right to know the truth in this matter, and I demand to know it. Speak, and dare to tell me a lie at your peril!"

"I have never been in the habit of telling lies, Sir Gilbert, either to you or anybody else," replied the keeper stiffly. "Since you force me to speak, I can't help myself, though I bound myself under a promise not to do so. Sir, I parted from Mr. Alec Clare five days ago, just before I left home to go and bury my brother."

A low cry broke from Sir Gilbert; his figure suddenly lost its rigidity and he sank back in his easy-chair, while his face blanched like that of a man at the point of death. Martin, terrified, made a step forward, but Sir Gilbert, tremblingly held up one hand. "Leave me alone," he murmured, "I shall be better presently." To those of his time of life the shock of sudden joy is oftentimes almost as trying as that of sudden grief.

"Sit down, Rigg," said the Baronet presently, mindful even at such a moment of the man's lameness. Then, as he lay back with closed eyes, little by little the colour ebbed back into his cheeks. It was life, then; his instinct had not led him astray, and his Alec was still in the land of the living! A great fountain of love and gratitude welled up in his heart—of reverent thankfulness and gratitude that it had pleased the Inscrutable Power who sways the destinies of mankind to vouchsafe him this crowning mercy so far beyond his deserts. What happiness to know that his firstborn—he whom, when young, he had so hardly treated that for years his memory of him had been unending remorse—had been given back to him as it were, indeed, from the tomb, and that a season of reparation might still be granted him! But let us not pry too curiously into all that passed through his mind at this, one of the supreme moments of his life. Let his white hairs and his many sorrows not appeal to us in vain.

After a time he began to question Rigg, eagerly and closely, about what he knew with reference to Alec. A summary of the information which he elicited piece-meal from the keeper is all that need be given here.

It appeared that "Master Alec," as Martin still, from old habit, persisted in calling him, had been in hiding at the Tower for upwards

of a month, in fact, ever since about two days before—quite unintentionally on his part—he so frightened Bessie Ogden on the terrace. The upper room of the old structure, ordinarily used by Martin as a bedroom, had been fitted up with a few extra articles of furniture and given up to his use; while Dulcie, the keeper's daughter, had looked after his meals. More than once Martin had heard him asseverate that he had only returned to the Chase in order to right a great wrong—to send fraud and villainy to the right-about, and that as soon as the task he had set himself was accomplished he should go back to the place from whence he had come. What he had meant thereby Martin did not know. During the day Alec had never stirred out of the Tower; only after nightfall had he ventured abroad, and then only in the traditional guise of the Grey Monk—a character which in his younger days, when home from school or college, he had assumed more than once out of sheer love of mischief. As to the means by which Alec had been enabled to obtain access to the Chase after the household had retired for the night, that was his own secret and one which he had never divulged to the keeper.

Extreme was Sir Gilbert's disappointment and chagrin when told that his son had finally quitted the Tower only about forty hours previously. This had happened during Martin's absence from home, but the latter was already aware that his guest's visit would presently come to an end, and that, although he continued to linger on like one who found it impossible to tear himself away from the home of his boyhood, his task was accomplished and there was nothing more left him to do.

"But if you were away at the time, how do you know that my son left the Tower when you say he did?" demanded the Baronet.

"Because I found this note, sir, waiting for me when I got home," responded the keeper.

Sir Gilbert took the proffered note with an eagerness he made no effort to dissemble.

"DEAR OLD MARTIN," it ran, "I am off to-night—Tuesday—and whether we shall ever see each other again is more than I can say. My hearty thanks are due to you and Dulcie for the hospitality you have shown me, and the many kindnesses I have received at your hands. You may be sure that both of you will be often in my thoughts when I am thousands of miles away, and I will not so much wrong you as to think you will forget me. I implicitly trust you to still preserve the same strict secrecy as heretofore with regard to my presence at the Chase. On no account must the faintest whisper of the truth escape the lips of either of you. More on this point I know that I need not write.

"I am especially desirous—in fact, I lay it on you as a charge—that you should keep yourself informed from day to day (which you will have no difficulty in doing) of the state of my dear father's health; and, should any necessity arise for you to do so, I rely upon you to

at once telegraph to me, under the name of 'John Alexander,' to the address given you on the other side. That this is most important you will readily understand, and that you will not neglect my wishes in the matter I feel assured.

"And now good-bye till we meet again—if ever we do.

"Your friend,

"A. C."

"Rigg, I should like to keep this, if you have no objection," said the Baronet when he had read it carefully through.

"No objection whatever, Sir Gilbert; only I should like you to bear in mind that I should have kept my promise to Master Alec, and that nobody would have got a word out of me, if you, sir, hadn't forced me to speak."

"That I quite understand. Under the circumstances no option was left you. But I wish you still to preserve the same secrecy. Not a syllable about this business must pass your lips to anyone else."

"Neither me nor Dulcie is of the gossiping sort. You may trust us for that, sir."

"I am quite sure I may. And now I won't detain you further; but I may tell you this—that, in the long run, you will find yourself no loser by this morning's work."

No sooner had the ex-keeper gone than the Baronet sought Lady Bell in her own room and was closeted with her for nearly a couple of hours. One result of the interview was that he sent a groom to bring back Everard Lisle, who, his morning's work dispatched, had left the Chase some time before.

"Lisle, I want you to start in the course of a few hours for America," he said to Everard when the latter had returned. "You will be the bearer of a note to my long-lost eldest son, John Alexander Clare, who, astounding to relate, I now find, from evidence which it is impossible to dispute, did not meet his death years ago, as, at the time, I was fully led to believe. But I need not enter into particulars just now. It is enough to say that he is still alive. So make your preparations for starting in the morning, and, when you come to dinner this evening, the note I want you to take will be ready for you, and I shall then be in a position to give you my final instructions."

In a matter of such vital importance it did not seem enough to Sir Gilbert to merely entrust his message to the post. A letter might, or might not, reach Alec; but he felt satisfied that Lisle would not rest till he had hunted him down, wherever he might be, and had put his father's message of forgiveness into his hands.

The note Sir Gilbert wrote was a very brief one, and, such as it was, his nervous excitement was so extreme as to render it all but illegible.

"Alec, my son, all is forgiven and forgotten," he wrote. "Come back to me—come back. I want you. It is your father who asks this of you."

(*To be continued.*)

THE ADVANTAGES OF A SHORT MEMORY.

"I SAY, brother, what a wonderful memory you have!" says the gipsy, Petulengro, to the Romany Rye, in Borrow's bright book of that name.

"I wish I had not, Jasper, but I can't help it; it is my misfortune," returns the other.

"Misfortune! well, perhaps it is; at any rate it is very ungenteel to have such a memory. I have heard my wife say that to show you have a long memory looks very vulgar, and that you can't give a greater proof of gentility than by forgetting a thing as soon as possible—more especially a promise, or an acquaintance when he happens to be shabby."

Irony apart, a too retentive memory will often prove a source of pain to its possessor, as of reproach to those around him. It is an enviable attribute, whether natural or acquired, to be able and willing to forget. "Do you remember," asked a young man of his mother, "how I once annoyed you as a boy?"—and he recalled from out the shadows of the past some youthful transgression with which he had long since grieved her. "No," she answered, "it has completely slipped my memory." "Ah! that is always the way with you, mother; you never remember anything against me."

We all know the value of a pardon that hinges on the ungracious condition, "I can forgive, but I can never forget." Some noble or less self-conscious natures, indeed, whose character might be summed up in Regan's cold estimate of old Lear, "He hath ever but slenderly known himself," will forget even before they have forgiven; in which case the slightest conciliatory token may suffice to dissipate the lingering fumes of anger, and to reinstate the offender more securely than ever in the affections he had wounded. Where there are no rankling memories there can exist no settled animosity.

But to leave these regions of the emotions, and come to more commonplace considerations. Cowper seriously congratulates himself on "the great felicity of a memory not very retentive," which enables him to find novelty in a book with which he had already amused himself some years previously. When we compare such a disposition with Carlyle's peevish grumble on the lack of anything new in literature, so that no man "without Themistocles' gift of forgetting could possibly spend his days in reading, we must acknowledge that dear though the pleasures of memory may be, forgetfulness is certainly not without its compensations. It enables those of uneventful lives continually to discover something new in the monotonous round of their existence. The "memory of the eye," to which, if we remember rightly, it was Pope who laid claim, does not come between

them and the enjoyment of scenes they have witnessed before, as it did in the case of the gardener Goethe tells of, who exclaimed in disgust at the ever-recurrent spectacle of clouds and trees and flowers. Neither man's art nor nature's (which is God's) ever fails of freshness for them. The aspect of the earth and sky, even in the spots to which circumstances may for years have bound them, is for ever opening up surprises on their view. The changing glories of the year, the hue of a leaf, the words of an old poem, even the reiterated good things of the papers, all greet him in their course with something of the charm of novelty. The blight of staleness never passes over their world.

It is curious, by the way, to note Hazlitt's attitude with regard to old books, which gathered value in his eyes in proportion to their age and to his early familiarity with them, affording him, as he said, a refreshment which he could "never have again in any other way." The half-remembered turns of phrase, the anticipated recurrence of reflections and events which so disgusted Carlyle, were but a source of renewed delight to him. An idiosyncracy which suggests that, for all the difficulties of his disposition, he yet possessed that capacity for creating to himself pleasure out of simple material through which perhaps it was that he was able to declare, almost with his last breath —"I have had a happy life."

Other advantages of a short memory are noted by Montaigne, whose observation would be sure to seize on whatever compensatory conditions might attach to a misfortune.

His own memory, he frankly acknowledges, was not only short, but also treacherous, failing him in everything but in the obligations of friendship. Amongst the comforts he derived from his infirmity he, with his own peculiar philosophy, enumerates the check it entailed on his ambition; such a defect, as he very justly remarks, being intolerable in those who take upon them the negotiations of the world." And, on the other hand, the spur it provided to his native wit and judgment which, debarred from the support of other men's researches would have occurred to them from a retentive memory, were cast for the lack of it upon their own resources. The ability of his memory to store up injuries he also touches on, and congratulates himself, in the very spirit of Cowper, on the fresh novelty with which old books would smile upon him, and not books only, but old places that he might revisit.

Another quaint item in the old Sieur's consolatory list is the restraint which a weak memory imposes on loquacity, those who are apt at recollection being tempted to enrich their subject, to the exhaustion of their hearers' patience, with illustrations drawn from far and near. Those great talkers, Dr. Johnson, Macaulay and Carlyle, were certainly all remarkable for their prodigious powers of memory; and when we consider what an engine of oppression was thus supplied them, to the discomfiture of their neighbours and the injury

of their own popularity, the justice of old Montaigne's apparently far-fetched deduction must be acknowledged.

One more advantage, somewhat akin to this last, may be suggested. Those of defective memory are never primed with facts. And the advantage of this (to their neighbours) is obvious when we consider that facts are often, as someone (was it Emerson?) remarked of them, the brute-beasts of conversation; bull-dogs which their owners ruthlessly set on to the harmless beings who, keeping faithful to the spirit of truth, may occasionally transgress it in the letter; or else brick-bats which those, who for the discipline of their neighbours are possessed of a memory through whose close meshes not the most insignificant item can escape, are always ready to hurl at one's head.

P. W. Roose.

A LANDED PROPRIETOR.*

WESTWARD the sea, and east, the green
Low hills in circling line,
And all the land that lies between—
The land, I say, is mine:
You had not thought, old friend, that I
So great a man had grown
Broad acres 'neath an English sky
To conquer as my own!

Yet mark you, in the soft spring light
Of this glad April day,
My orchards, stretching pink and white
Towards the golden bay;
And see how rich in grassy yields
My meadows generous sweep—
The dew-hung, daisy-spangled fields
The mowers' scythes will reap.

There, fed by countless laughing rills
To current strong and wide,
Flows through the hollow of the hills
My river's mimic tide—
The village lies within the bend
That skirts a neighbouring shire;
I have, I think, no truer friend
Than yonder grey church spire!

* "Have we not all thousands of acres of our own. . . . We are a great landed proprietors if we only knew it."—SIR JOHN LUBBOCK.

And where the eye takes furthest bound,
The forest's unbowed age
Uprears a sheltering fence around
My goodly heritage :
What fairer sight for man to see?
What land more full of grace?
The lines are fallen unto me
In a most pleasant place!

I know each nook in tree or hedge
Where shy birds build their nest,
Linnet or warbler of the sedge,
Or wren with golden crest :
To-day my lark sang brave and strong
Up from the springing corn ;
His ancestry have sung that song
Each year since I was born!

I know each inch of yonder copse,
Each living thing that stirs,
Where squirrel swings and rabbit hops
Among the yellow furze :
And blindfold I could find the banks
Where primroses are rife,
As though the earth were giving thanks
In bursts of lovely life.

One scarce could count from dawn to dark,
From sunset to sunrise,
What gracious things a man may mark
Beneath the changing skies ;
I lock the beauty in my heart,
I touch, I taste, I hold ;
I have in it a lot and part
You cannot buy with gold.

Enriched by Time, unwronged by Fate,
Unstirred by trivial needs,
I glory in my fair estate
Where love holds title-deeds :
Who buys a thing—it is but lent,
Who loves it keeps the key—
His Grace in London holds the rent-
The land belongs to me!

CHRISTIAN BURKE.

OFF ARRAN'S ISLE.

By Kathleen Watson.

AWAY in the loneliest part of Arran Island, where the heather-hills slope steeply down to the shores of a spacious land-locked bay, a line of rocks, lying deep under water when the tide is up, leads out to the headland point which commands the western entrance to the bay. Before the point is reached a little cave is passed. Only by the rocks at low-water mark is it possible to get there at all, for above it the great cliffs tower steep and sheer into the air defiantly and effectually opposing all thought of approach to it from the top.

There came one day to this little cave, for old sake's sake, one with whom in his latter life it had gone hardly. As he lingered in the lonely spot, gentle memories came stealing one by one around him, and before he turned to go, he went to the far end of the cave, and with some small difficulty, and a smile at what he called his childishness, raised a large stone that happened to be there. Then, in a hollow space, beneath the stone, wondering greatly, he saw on the sandy yellow floor a little packet bound tightly, firmly up in a sheet of waterproof cloth. The cloth was still somewhat damp from where the sea had washed in by the edges of the stone. Slowly, with a strange grip at his heart, he pulled asunder the bands that bound it. Inside, he found a tin box about three inches high and seven by five perhaps in area. Pulling off the lid, he drew out a faded bunch of Parnassus grass tied round with a piece of pink cord, the manuscript of a story, and then—the leaves of what seemed to be a girl's diary. And by the mournful swell of the incoming tide, he read :—

September 1st.—He went yesterday. Shall I ever be again so that the seas, the birds, the heather-hills, and God will be enough for me? How beautiful to live the life he lives! To drink in all the glory of the world, all the delight of days, all the sweetness of nights, all that is strange, or brave, or lovable in men and women, and to give it back again to the world which will not see these things, he told me, unless they are put before it in black and white, in the shape of what we call books.

We were talking far out on the rocks that night. "Some," he said, "get their first glimmer into the great secrets of life by contemplation of a picture—it may be only a simple study of a woman at a window looking out at a sail, away on the farthest sea. Some hear in music that which all other voices on earth are powerless to tell them. Most find in books the language which goes straightest

to their hearts. Then, perhaps, they turn to life itself to tell them the rest—but only because the books first showed them how to do it. Yes! Books are very well—some of them—yet still the things that they will never hold, the things that never have been and never can be written, the things that cannot be spoken, scarcely looked or breathed, surely they are sweetest. Do you understand, dear?"

Three times in all he called me "dear." This was the first. It is a little simple word. I used it this morning when I wrote to the keeper for papa; yet when *he* says it, it is as though sweet music sounded across the sea, and I, alone on all the shore, stood listening. I told him that I thought I understood. I do not know if he heard me. He had a way of asking questions without seeming to care, scarcely to hear, whether one answered him or not.

And he has gone. His book is done. All the dear quaint ways and speech of the people, all the grand hills and their secrets, all the lovely land which lies around my island-home, all the tender lights which linger on the seas at morning and at evening—he has caught their inspiration; they have breathed their strong fair life into his; and he will give them faithfully out again to the unseeing world, in the romance of which he has written the greater part here on these same rocks, with me unheeded at his side. When he had done as much as he felt inclined for, he would read the sheets out to me, and often ask me concerning names and little ways of speech.

Just over there, on that rock where the sea is quietly coming in, I learnt how sweet Mary McAlister, sweetest surely of all the heroines that was ever written down, prayed for her love that the best might crown his life, and when the best for him meant the worst for her, hesitated never a moment, but said good-bye to him, her tearless blue eyes bright with the love which is the love everlasting. The rock where he wrote that is holy ground to me. Twice a day the sun kisses it, and twice a day the cool sea comes up and covers it. Otherwise, I think, nothing touches it. On my way out here I always skip across it from the one on the other side. It is a good jump, but I can just manage it. To tread on it would be like treading on a heart to me. I wonder what he would say if he knew. I wish my eyes were blue, but they are grey, very, very grey, papa always says.

September 3rd.—Papa heard from him this morning. He is staying for the shooting at a great house in the north. There is a large party there. Before he went he told me who some of the people were to be. There is one called Lady Evelyn Bertram. He was glad to think she would be there, because they met last year and became, he told me, the very best of good friends after just one hour's acquaintance. At the end of his letter to papa, he sent many kind regards to my stepmother and his love to little Nell, as he often called me, though indeed I was nineteen last birthday and am taller than most girls, I fancy.

It was a strange idea this, that came to me to keep a diary. It

only came to me when I stood on the rocks waving him a last good-bye as his steamer sailed away. Something went from my heart to my throat, and I knew that if I stood still looking out any longer on that great sweet sea, I should choke for very agony of longing. So I went back swiftly by the rocks and up the heather-hills to where my home is, and there I went upstairs to my own little study and got paper, the wonderful pen he gave me, a fairly-sized tin box, and a sheet of waterproof cloth, and brought them back out here. I had walked altogether seven miles without knowing that I had walked one. Luckily my stepmother was away at Brodick for the afternoon. Not that she is aught but kind to me, but she is so sharp at seeing things, and insatiable in her curiosity, and I would have no one in the world ever know of this. Each day when I have written what I want to write, I shall put the record in the tin box and tie the waterproof sheet tightly round it and put it under the big stone at the far end of the cave. When I lay awake in my bed at home, I shall think of how the sea is creeping in and covering up my secret; of how the little waves are washing over the record of that which came to make my life so radiant and so rich; of how, should there come to me perhaps, the sudden death from which we weekly pray to be delivered, then no one will ever know how well I loved him, no one but God and the sea, the two great secret-keepers of the world.

The lights are so beautiful this evening, and I have tarried so long to watch them, that the tide is already on the turn. The steamer in which he went away is coming round the point. Perhaps it brings me a letter from him! Who knows? He said he would write. I must put my writing by, and run!

September 4th.—The steamer brought me no word from him. That is natural. Men, in the efforts of whose brains a whole nation shares, cannot be expected to trouble overmuch about each little individual of that nation at whom they may have smiled in passing. And yet he stayed with us for two months. For two months, he and I, we rode and walked, we fished and boated, we planned and effected, we laughed and talked—or sometimes we were silent—together. So I cannot think that I am nothing more to him, for instance, than the pieces of sea-weed that he would fish up from the pools on the point of his stick, admire them for a moment, then fling them far from him out upon the sea.

But I will never be exacting. Exacting women must be so odious, I should think. Should he never notice me again in all his lifetime, should he forget me utterly and wholly, I still can only say: "My dear love, since it is you who do it, it must be well done."

September 5th.—I do not quite know why it is, yet my life would somehow seem to date from that sunny afternoon at the end of June, when papa, who went to meet him, brought him speeding back along the high path that runs between the heather and the yellow broom. Were anyone to tell me now that I should write an account of my

life up to that date, I should feel benumbed with helplessness, and be able to set down no other words than these—

"Happy as a bird is happy in its nest."

Until there came a day when someone whispered to the little bird that it had wings, and taught it how to use them, and then the nest was no longer all-sufficient for it, but rather the wide world itself seemed small when it fancied it must spread those tiny trembling wings and sing its ecstacy of love from pole to pole!

I remember that the week before he came, papa had given me his last book to read and the thought of it was all fresh and beautiful in my heart as we sat awaiting him in the library, my stepmother looking very earnest over some accounts she was adding up, I, in my white serge dress, leaning from the window to talk my impatience off to a starling grubbing about on the lawn. Finally for lack of response, I turned to my stepmother:

"What a pity papa has no photograph of him! But he will be tall, and spare, and have deep curious eyes that will look best when they are smiling. Often he will seem to see us, when as a matter of fact he will be seeing the far-away things of his own creation alone. Of course his hair will be a little grey, his back a little bent, his coat, even his best one, a little thread-bare. I hope he won't be very absent-minded, don't you, mother? If he only goes to the mild length of taking mustard with his strawberry-cream and sugar with chicken, it will be supportable, and by way of a change, quite refreshing. But I read the other day of a literary man, who, in a fit of thinking, walked straight into a river in broad daylight, and was with difficulty saved at all. It will be most interesting but at the same time rather trying, if——"

"My dear Nell, what a way you have of putting things; I see McNeill charges a half-penny a pound more for mutton than he did at this time last year. We really must kill our own. Yes, indeed, it would be very trying."

Presently she called to me:

"You will soil your dress, Nell, if you lean out with your arms on the sill like that. I should like at least his first impression of you to be a clean one; it will probably be his last."

You could never put a note of exclamation after anything my stepmother says. She never means to be irresistibly funny or irresistibly pathetic, or irresistibly anything. And though at heart she is generous to the core, yet I verily think she would fight to the death a poor butcher whom she rather fancied to be cheating her out of a solitary farthing beyond his just due. Taking her altogether, the effect she has on me at times is too comical for expression.

"Mother!" I laughed, "do you remember a sentence in that last book of his, about a fine soul grasping the light of the world and calling it his own? You think the man who wrote that would notice

whether my dress was soiled beyond redemption or white with a celestial whiteness?"

She looked very serious for a moment, then said:

"Surely we never had kidneys for three days running the week before last? Think, dear, did we? No, I do not remember that sentence. I remember it was all right and they married in the end. As far as I could see, they might have done so in the beginning. And never tell me that men don't notice what a girl has on. Before he has been here five minutes, he will have noticed that your hair is golden, your eyes grey, that your dress fastens in folds at the side, that your white silk sash is twisted twice round the waist, and that you have roses at your throat. If he is half a man, which, from your father's accounts I presume he is, he will not be long before he notices too that your shoes are both smart and neat, your stockings of black silk, and your ankles by no means badly turned. He will probably think you are wearing the roses for his especial joy. My dear, I have not lived for ten years in London and been married twice for nothing. I may say that I know men—profoundly."

She spoke without any heat, or defiance, or sense of fun: she might as well have been saying that she knew bakers and butchers—profoundly. And while I sat quietly in a deep soft chair, and tucked my feet well under my dress, and took the roses and held them in my hand, and pondered as to what it was to know men after the manner of my stepmother, carriage-wheels came crunching along the high western drive, and almost in another moment my father came into the room in his cheery way, saying:

"Here he is! Mr. Alec Stanton. My wife and daughter. Now then, Stanton, which of the two evils is it to be—tea, or something stronger?"

Then he smiled at us, and from the moment that he took my hand in his I count that my soul's awakening began.

September 8th.—I am always thinking, as yesterday or a little while ago I wrote it down: "How beautiful to live the life he lives!" One evening, he and I, we wandered through the upper reaches of Glen Sannox, where the beauty is so wild and terrible, that I, whose life is encompassed with beauty on every side, nevertheless tremble each time afresh as I stand where Goat Fell rises to the south, with Glen Iorsa stretching in sublime loneliness to the west, and far away in front, little Corrie village lying where the hills dip down to the sober seas. I was listening as he talked to me, and thinking even as I listened.

Now I, I drink in beauty, love, sweet ways and sights and sounds, with every breath I breathe. Yet no one is the better off because I do so. If my life is not particularly unkind or wrong, it is because nothing such ever comes to touch it. Then I think of him and of his life, and of the vastness of the difference between it and mine.

For instance, it may be a small thing only—it may be just that

John Cromla is telling him how in places the heather grows across deep narrow chasms, so that it would seem that no chasm is there at all: and how, the other day, a little lamb fell through one such place to a depth of forty feet, yet was not killed: and of the agony of the poor mother, powerless to help, yet hearing the cries of the little one below. Or it may be a sense of the mystery and the passion of the sea which enchains and holds him fast so that he is dead to aught else but its wonderful strange influence. But whether it be a small thing or a great that touches him, he grasps the charm, the spirit, the secret of it all, and gives them out again in strong sweet language so that the glad ones of the world may read to their greater gladness, the blind ones to their sight perhaps, and the weary ones to their exceeding comfort and delight.

Then it was, I think, that the idea first took hold of me, that if I might but touch the fringe of such a life, my own would thereby grow calm and whole, and strong with the strength that comes for each day's need. So I bravely up and asked him—we were resting on a rock in the wildest, weirdest part of the glen, so near to where the foaming water dashes past, that I remember its soft spray caught my face, and he had my hand still in his, where he had been holding it during the last bit of stiff, almost perilous descent. He was always so careful of me—of me, who knew no danger of my island-home, and yet was pleased sometimes to think I did, so I might feel around me the comfort of his protecting ways!

"Tell me, will you, what is wanted to write a story? Not a great story, yet one that would go straight to people's hearts and leave them a little other than it found them perhaps?"

"My Heather-Nell, why do you ask?"

"Because—I want to know."

"So many things. Chiefly, perhaps, a heart to feel, a brain to grasp, and a patience indescribable with which to set the record down. Are you going to try and manage it?"

"Since I have known you it has seemed to me, that I would rather be the very least and smallest worker in the life you live, than gain the greatest glory and renown in any other."

"That is the right spirit, Heather-Nell. That is as it should be. But it is a life for which a brave, brave soul is needed. Is it for fame you would wish to live it? I think not, but if so, God help you. Can you see the ladder set up on earth and reaching to that giddy height? Many are climbing it; some are slipping down even from what they once attained—the pressure is so great, the rungs are crowded with the strugglers; each time we gain a step, we are treading on the fingers of a brother or a sister below us; it all hurts horribly, and we dare not think too much, or we should never *do* at all. Is it for love that you would live it? If so, God help you too, my dear. For you must go into a strange land and suffer many things; tear-stained and pain-marked, with weary feet and aching heart, you must

tread the thorny shadowy way: and, it may be, that in your darkest hour you will weep alone. Will you brave all this, all this for love and for the sweet work's sake?"

Long and earnestly he looked at me, and I felt the hot tears rising slowly to my eyes. The air was sweet and very still: the shadows lay long and blue across the land: a silence was around us like to no other silence I have known. Where the great hills rose to the high gold sky, a wonderful tremulous light was quivering. When I see that light in the sky at evening, I always think of the face of one I know in the village near our home; one whose life has been sanctified by a pain, so mighty that the gentlest fingers may not touch it; and because of her, I call it the Renunciation Light.

And thinking of the sad grave words he last had spoken, looking at them, as it were, through the magic of that clear transfigured light, I saw that one must work for love, and love alone, though at God's altar one may never stand and take one's love for better or for worse.

I sometimes wonder if he knew a little what was passing in my mind just then. For he took my other hand as well, and held them both within his own big strong ones, and in his tenderest way he spoke to me:

"Only keep you yourself unspotted from the world, my Heather-Nell, and do not be afraid to dream the old big faiths which our hearts are growing small to hold to-day, always remembering that he who would know how to live must learn to love—must learn at all, at any cost, to love."

Then he watched with me a little skiff that seemed to be sailing right into the heart of the sunset fire on the far western waters, while over the mountain-top where the sky was pale a small red star hung tremblingly.

"It is a night of inspiration, is it not," he said. "A night when great thoughts come to us, and insight makes us brave, when we hear no more the discord of the earth, for that wide and faint-white sky breathes one word only, that of Peace. On such a night as this, Heather-Nell, when our hearts seem very near to that great Heart of the Most High, we plan in confidence and quietness the tasks and labour of our life. On such a night as this, when the moon will soon be climbing up that sweet steep sky, and the whole space of earth and sea and heaven be wrapped in a tender radiance which cannot be uttered, we look most fearlessly down the misty pathway of the future, and seem to know that what we *would* do, that we *will* do: that courageous, constant, patient as we would be, that we also will be! But to-night will pass away: its glow and glory will soon be no more seen: and, sadder thought than this, the quickening faith, the hope, the transport and the eager longing which it inspired in us—these cannot stay with us. The weary days will come, the days of darkness and of hardness, when work will seem so hateful and so hopeless, and death itself, perhaps, the fairest thing that life can show. Then

mocking voices will ask of you: 'What good? What good? Why care? Why strive?' and like many another one before you, you will be tempted to lay down your arms and try no more. But, little one, it is just here, that you must be so strong, and never heed the storm that blinds, the cruelty that cuts, the comfortlessness that unnerves.

'For tasks in hours of insight willed,
Must be in hours of gloom fulfilled.'

So a brave soul has sung to us. Once in a weary while, it may be on a lonely mountain-top or it may be in the crowded city-heart, something sets the Divine spark aglow within us: in a moment it dies away, and we have to work for whole long years by the memory of that light alone.

"Once, in an ancient legend-steeped Italian city, I knew an old musician, worn and very weary with the way of life. He was always working, always before his scores, at dawn or in the twilight seated either at the organ or at his table in the organ-loft. His cheeks were furrowed and his hands were stiff and bent, yet his dim eyes held some strange sweet secret in their quiet depths. One evening as we sat together talking in the fragrant silence, he told it me.

"'"Very many years ago,' he said, 'it must be nearly forty now, I had a dream. And in that dream I heard a music. A music tender, warm, divine; a music that was never of the earth. And ever since I have been trying to find it again, but I cannot—I cannot—at least, not yet.'

"The people called him mad. Everything they cannot understand they call so too. The people, for whom your heart must beat in constant sympathy, will have no sympathy for you, my Heather-Nell. But you and I, we know he was not mad. We know that he was working by the memory of the light that once was his."

So he spoke, my dearest one, to me, to me! And oh! how high my heart was lifted up! The little skiff that was sailing into the western fire had gone, I wonder where. The glory of the day declined, and we set our faces homeward across the darkening land.

But first—first—under the shadow of the hills he kissed me. "Dear!" he said, and kissed me. And the memory of that, the only kiss he ever gave or ever will give me, will stand between me and my pain to the end of life.

September 10*th*.—Two days have gone and it is evening-time, and I am in my lonely little cave once more. I have been busy all the long warm mornings since he went, writing the story which he told me I might send to him when done. It is quite a short tale, but it is not finished yet, for I am continually seeing all its faults and trying to set them right. I have called it "*The Love of Helen Cromla for John McRae*," and I hope he will not tell me I must change its name, though indeed it is not after the fashion of the story-world perhaps.

"Be always simple and try for no effects," he used to tell me.

"Write from your deepest heart and never mind if it hurts you. But clothe your thoughts in plain and common words, and take for your theme some simple thing around you. Do not be sorry if no great tragedy or storm of action lies within it. You would not have the world always walking about on stilts, would you? A grain of humanity is worth an ounce of plot. Above all, let your work be very quietly done. Let your mountains and your sea speak to you sometimes of work that is

"'Too great for haste, too high for rivalry.'"

On the night he spoke these things to me, he gave me a little bunch of Parnassus grass and tied it himself with a pink cord which had held his manuscript together. When, in my work, the actual seems so far from the ideal, I sometimes take it from its hiding-place, and the tiny crushed white stars bid me be of good cheer once more.

September 12th.—Quite early this morning I got up and flung my window open to the sweet, strong mountain air which seemed to be filled with a voiceless benediction. This has been a day for me, such as no other day on earth will be again, and on looking back across it now that its dear twilight is sinking down, I am glad to remember that one of my waking thoughts was that the love of God is always going round and round the world He made. I cannot say what made me think just that, in the silence and the sweetness of that radiant dawn. The larches glistened with a thousand drops of dew, the cows were nibbling at the hawthorn trees, the linnets rose up out of the heather with rushing ecstacy of song, the distant mountains and the sea were veiled in a luminous silver mist. It came to me how, on that evening whose glory he and I lived through together, he had said that the sight of all fair things should leave on us some little stamp of their own fairness. Then I prayed that some touch of the calmness and the confidence of that blessed morning might be mine, the morning that did not fear to smile and love, although the long sad winter lies ahead.

Later on, as I sat in the library, amongst the books and flowers and pleasant things and steadfastly set my face from looking out toward that great sweet sea that throbs between us, I had aching need of the things which the morning's fairness bade me ask for. I heard the post-boy's horn echoing up the brae and the pigeon's fluttering from the dove-cot at the sound of it as they always do. I did not run out to meet the post-boy, because I knew that my face was all aglow. So I waited till Andrew found me out, saying, with a queer smile on his dear old face:

"One for you, Miss Heather!"

There I sat, in the depths of my great chair, and held the little white thing to my heart, and talked to it, and kissed it, and dreamed about it, and asked it, in tears of joy, why it had tarried so long in coming! I could not open it for very delight's sake. It was here

and I always must hold what is his in a reverence which I cannot explain at all. But at last I turned my chair round to the window and the rose-garden and the brave blue sky, and the sea so far below, and presently, whilst these things were blotted from my sight, I read. I think if I write the words down here, in my little record of the bitter-sweetness of the days, all that is gentle in them will stay with me, while that in them which sets my heart so sorely aching may somewhat pass away.

"How is it with you, my Heather-Nell? Forgive me, won't you? Your eyes were made to forgive and love with, so I stand a chance, I think. But I should have written long before this to you. I have no excuse to offer. Are you working, dreaming, hoping, remembering? You have not forgotten, have you, how fearless we were, you and I, in our talks with one another? How we talked of love, marriage, and the future, as serenely and as closely as of the stars, the clouds, the sea? In the world there are not many souls who can look into each other's eyes and talk as you and I did on those evenings by the sea. Do you remember when we set our ideals each before the other, and wondered how far towards them our lives would let us climb? My Heather-Nell, very, very soon: I am to be married. I should like to hold your hand in mine again and hear you say, as I know that you are doing, in that dear lingering voice of yours: 'Be—very—happy.' And yet I should not. Will you hold out hands to me across the waters, invisible hands of a friendship, a comprehension that nothing can destroy? It is to her of whom I spoke once to you. I danced with her one night, just a week ago. I danced—I danced my head away. Send the story to me when done. And work on, sweet eyes, for life, for love, for the sake of that high estate to which many, it may be, are called, but for which only those who keep their ideals untarnished are chosen."

That is all, and it is signed simply, shortly—*Alec.*

At lunch, my stepmother, to whom he sent a society paper with the news of his engagement to the Lady Evelyn Bertram in it, remarked across the table to my father:

"He has played his cards very fairly well. She has birth and money. He has brains and common sense. Put the four together and you get a by no means despicable whole. Also, he has or will have fame. Love, did you say, my dear? If love cannot thrive in such a ground as that, it is a commodity altogether beneath the consideration of either a lady or a gentleman. Which reminds me that our potatoes are doing extremely well this year—that new sort."

Then my father looked at me in his comical way, and we both laughed, oh! how heartily and gaily! until my mother caught fire herself at last and joined in with us in a bewildered wondering kind of way which excited my father and me to greater merriment even than before, she

looking all the time so prettily proud of being the cause of so much mirth. Surely if a list of all the good things God has given us were to be drawn up in order of merit, so to speak, the delight of laughter would come very near the top. I know it saved my heart this day from breaking visibly before the eyes of those two dear and kind ones.

And now the golden day is nearly over. Very gently and fairly it rose for me. That early glory on the mountains, the morning star that hung in the wide pink eastern sky, the dew that lingered on the larches, the gold that trembled on the sea, the little letter that came at noon, the hour, the dark and tearless hour that followed: the laughter and the lunch, the long ride with papa across the sweet wild moorland, the quiet hour here by the sea when all God's tender world is ringing to evensong.—O my dear one, the beauty of this day's dawn of this day's close, shall not be in vain for me, since no small thought concerning you shall ever stain my heart. But the tears are blinding my eyes at last, the tears you may not kiss away—and I can only say, good-night, good-bye, beloved. God grant that she may love you very, very well.

September 19th.—A little week has gone. We call it summer still —the days are so fair and sweet and warm; just as sometimes we call it youth when the heart is very tired but the eyes remember still to smile.

I have been taking hold of my life and looking it well and fairly in the face. At first I could not. When the common tasks claimed me no more, I could only turn my blinded eyes from the sky so blue and hide them where I lay, face downwards in the heather, while the prayerless pain-swept hour went by. Until one calm bright morning I got up out of my stupor, and by a heaven-sent flash of insight saw what one's life should strive to be, when one has memory to bless and work to strengthen it. How beautiful if one had hope as well—if down the long vista of the future that golden lamp was held aloft! How lightly then would one's weary feet tread the ways of earth, how little would one feel the loneliness, the coldness, the dismay! For that great Beyond of Love one would find again what the life held for a little time had lost. But he, my dearest one, he is more dear to me than had he only died.

So I turned to my life and saw that of all things good and loyal it held these two for me—memory and work. The memory is mine whether I will or no. Surely also, the work shall be mine none the less. Since I need not work to keep body and soul together, all the more should I work that my soul may some day go back bright and steadfastly to Him who gave it.

I think of the great apostles and martyrs of work; and of the vast unwritten army of the world who follow in their train. Have memory and hope been with them too, these who call work their fortifier and their faith: or has the work itself, whether of head or hand, sweet or bitter, crowned or uncrowned, been their constant all in all? I think

too, of him, the large-hearted calm philosopher who, as he lay dying, reverently thanked the Author of all goodness for the little excursion he had been allowed to make from nothingness into reality; who saw such beauty in all human joy and woe, seeing how they touched with the glory and reality this little conscious space called life which stands between the darkness of what has been, the darkness of what shall be? Sternly, yet beautifully and bravely according to his light, he put hope away from him, not daring to say "I believe" where he could not say "I see," in spite of those heavenly words so dear. Yet to him his work was very real, his heart strong with love, his life fearless and without reproach. I wonder what was the motive that inspired him. I wonder, did a face sometimes shine between him and his labour? A face, as tender and as grave, as comforting and as comprehending, as the one that still sometimes smiles on me, where I lie dreaming softly of the love that never will be, listening mutely to words that never were. I would that all the world had memories as sweet as mine.

September 22nd.—The story is done. It is of course only a short one. It must lie here in the corner of the cave, along with these pages of my diary. I was to have sent it to him and he was to have told me where its errors lay, and where, if he could discover any, its merit. But in these latter evenings, as I wrote, I seemed to be dipping my pen in my own heart's blood, and I know that now I cannot send the little red-stained sheets to him.

September 25th.—The bay was very bright and calm last night. The sun had gone down below Goat Fell and all the western sky was gilded gold and pink; only the evening star was out; the herring-boats lay at anchor beyond the lighthouse rocks; a mavis was singing from the fields above the cliffs. I stopped from my writing to think how fair it was, and I turned to him to say so. I thought he answered me: "Dear, it is," and I turned once more to see his smile and remembered then that the great sea lay between us and that his smiles were for another.

September 26th.—It is Sunday to-day. My father and stepmother are lunching and spending the afternoon at the Castle, and they will not be home again until the evening. I was invited too, but my white serge dress is a little soiled and my linen ones are not smart enough, and our high light dog-cart is best when they are just the two in front, so that altogether we thought I had better stay at home. Father kissed me on both cheeks before they drove off, and looked at me rather sadly for a moment, I thought, and said that I must get some of the pink of my namesake into my face before he kissed it again! I made them each a button-hole—papa, one of heather, and my stepmother, one of sweet late roses.

"And now, run and make yourself one, dear," she called to me as I stood watching them out of sight; "at one time you were never without a flower in your frock!"

She does not know of the little bunch of Parnassus grass that is inside my dress bodice, lying against my heart.

In the glory of the afternoon I came down through the shadows of the glen, and by the heather hills, through the forest where the red deer roam, and across the cool soft sands to where my cave is. And now, as I sit at its little gate which opens on to the wide blue pastures of the sea, a great peace is in me, and God has lifted all my weariness away.

The sea-song is sighing softly all around—the sea-song whose magic and whose mystery no man may altogether know. It is singing me strangely, gently, to a garden very fair and far away. Sometimes before I have caught dream-glimpses of that garden, seen it in some imperfect troubled light, through the mists of childhood's fancy peopled with the angel-heroes of childhood's day. Only then, when I longed to enter and call a little corner of it mine, my hands were not strong enough to turn the handle of the great door built in the high wall that goes all round, while now the door is open wide and no faintness dims the vision, for the sun is shining down the long gravelled walks, and the glow of colour and the wealth of scent are surely as they never were before. I am sitting on a little wooden seat near the door whose handle once seemed so high to reach, and the great white lilies with their hearts of gold are keeping sentinel watch behind. Down the fragrant silence I see the roses shining like little globes of crimson and of amber light. The sunbeams are striking on the close-set lines of the laurels till each tiny burnished leaf is a quivering point of fire. On either side of the central walk tall hedges of the scarlet phlox send a glow down the radiant way; at their feet the allium lies like a snowdrift, and the heartsease with their tiny velvet lips are clustering; while by the old moss-grown wall are great banks of lavender and purple thyme and the musk whose yellow cups are so full of scent and sweetness. A thousand little bees are flying for their treasure to that garden; their songs are smiting the odorous air; they take, in time, each one his little load of wealth back to the world beyond the old grey wall, yet the garden world within is still the richer for their coming.

Though everything there is so homely, so human, so simply named, yet each flower is a suggestion, each shadowy or sun-smitten way an inspiration—a continual comfort breathes from that garden face. Over the great door near me a glorious passion-flower is climbing, the scarlet wound-marks at its heart seem to say that those who enter in to the peace of that dear garden must enter by the royal road of pain. At the farther end from where I sit, a screen of tall cypress lends an enchanting air of mystery to the gentle ways. Through the door, which stands ajar, come glimpses of green woods where the ground is starred with blue hepaticas and the little periwinkle pale Jean Jacques Rousseau loved so well. Beyond the woods are upland slopes where the corn-lands are whitening to a harvest which seems

as no earthly harvest I have known, and, here and there amongst that harvest-gold are fields all pink with the saint-foin which the monks of old used to call the Holy Hay of the Bethlehem Manger, while down on the sweet faint wind come snatches of the songs of those who work just underneath God's brave blue sky. As I sit, the shadows lengthen, the birds and bees have stayed their music, the evening star is trembling beyond the highest cedar, the flowers are waiting for the evening dews to fall and kiss them, the trees show black against the paling azure of the west.

Ah! what is that wondrous glow lighting up the cypress gloom at the far end of the garden? See, how the little leaves take on a swift and sudden glory they surely never knew before! See, how like some shining peace that wondrous radiance bears down the tender solemn ways! See, how in the triumph and the silence, each tiny flower-face is turned to catch some gleam of the marvellous light: some of the little heads are drooping: it is as though their joy was stronger than their strength.

And then, and then, up from the cypress shadows, making all the light grow faint and pale around, there comes a Face, a Presence—oh! is it, is it indeed—His—Face? Not the dear eager face of my earthly love—but that other Face, the Face which sometimes shines so dimly down our way when the world is bright about us——

Ah! those outstretched arms, that slow and stately tread, those wound-marked feet that do not seem to touch the earth, that face so gentle and so beauteous which holds in it the comprehension of the pain and perplexity of all the world, those eyes so welcoming—it is for me, for me, that those arms are opened wide, for me that those eyes are kind, for me that those lips say: "Come! Little dear one, come away!"

* * * * *

I have been sleeping. The strong tide is sweeping up. No help, no human soul is near. I cannot swim. Death, death that will not wait or tarry, cold strange death—its icy fingers are touching me.

Oh, my love, my love, I have so little time, I cannot say what I would say to you. But if, some day, should life go hardly with you and you come back to this very spot in memory of the pleasantness it once was to you to be here, and just for the old sake's sake you turn to the little secret of the cave which is known alone to you and me, and find these pages there where I will put them, then, Oh, my dear love, let it be no sorrow to you to know how well I loved you. If in the blackness and the hardness of the day God lets my spirit come to you with some sense of nearness and of comfort—ah! then, what sweetness to have died. To be nearer to you in death perhaps, than in life I ever might have been. God, who sent that long sweet sleep to me just now, the sleep that means my death, God comfort those two kind hearts at home and presently take their pain away.

The water is rising fast. Life with its dreams, its faith, its anguish

was strangely glorious, since you were living too. Good-bye, my well-beloved, good-bye, for I am very tired and He says: "Come."

* * * * *

The last words were evidently written in greatest haste: it was with considerable difficulty that the man who was reading could make them out at all. He had stood rooted to the wave-washed spot so long that the strong breath of the swift in-rolling sea was already on his face, just as it had been on hers perhaps, on that long-gone evening when she waited for her death. Like her, he too was very tired. But, unlike her, he was not brave to die—perhaps because no sweet face smiled to him across the waters, saying:

"Come."

World-sick, world-tainted, but ever clinging to that world, while yet there was time he sped across the darkening sands and up the hills to where a lonely little burying-ground stands high to the mountains and the western sea, and a small granite cross rising out of a glowing mass of the flower which once had given its name to her tells how, one September Sunday evening,

HEATHER HELEN BUTE,

the well-beloved and only child of Archibald and Mary Helen Bute, was drowned off the Arran shores.

A SERENADE.

THOU art the soul of my song,
Thou art the scent of my rose;
My thought as I fare through the world's giddy throng,
My dream in night's lonely repose!
Thou art mine idol below,
Thou art my angel above,
My sheen in the shadow, my shade in the glow—
Thou art my love!

The prayer that I wing to the sky,
The tale that I waft to the sea,
The sigh that I blend with the rivulet's sigh,
They all are of thee, are of thee!
Thou art mine Iris afar,
O'er the grief-troubled waters my dove,
My rapture of spring that no winter can mar—
Thou art my love!

WILLIAM TOYNBEE.

LETTERS FROM SOUTH AFRICA.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "In the Lotus Land," etc., etc.

Johannesburg, *May*, 1893.

CARE AMICE,—Out of the blackness of the night we passed into light and warmth. It was not too soon, for nature was fairly exhausted. We had been travelling for twenty-four hours, and much of it had been very hard work.

A look round upon our present surroundings disclosed them to be of the usual South African description. The hotel was a long straggling bungalow. Our sleeping-rooms ran round a sort of court-yard or quadrangle: small closets or cubicles built of wood, of which the best that could be said was that each traveller had one to himself. They were very bare, and furnished with the plainest necessaries; no table or luxurious couch: a bed that would have delighted the Duke of Wellington; small enough to find space in the closet, and to admit of two turns—a turn in and a turn out. This was very much what must happen to us; we should have no time for more, for we were to start again before daylight.

Up on this high plateau land, 5000 feet above the level of the sea, the air was keen and cold. Remember it is autumn weather, though the month of May, and even in summer there are nights up here when a great coat is not as out of place as a skeleton at a feast. We were glad to escape to the dining-room, where we feasted without any skeleton, thanks to light and warmth and wholesome faring. Our host waited upon us himself, independent of manner as became an important member of this "New Republic," yet genuinely anxious for our comfort.

Presently we went out again into the night, for it was our only chance of seeing anything of the place. It was pitch dark; such roadway as there was could not be seen. Standerton calls itself a small town; it might add, in the midst of a desert. As far as we could discern it consisted of a few rough, undulating thoroughfares, with here and there a detached bungalow. To us, it seemed in the darkness that grass grew in streets which were full of inequalities. It looked like an unfamiliar village, where neither gas nor oil-lamp helped to make darkness visible. Here and there a streak of light gleamed through a closed shutter, but there was no other sign or token of life. We met neither dog nor cat nor human being. The silence and stillness of death reigned.

Yet there was something weird and interesting amidst all this desolation. One felt so very far out of the world; the whole

sensation was so unfamiliar—this lonely, desolate spot, in which a handful of people live out their little lives in the midst of a desert. What a strange existence it must be. We managed to decipher that in one house a doctor lived, in another a lawyer, and wondered what diseases, physical or financial, could possibly affect these isolated inhabitants. Dependent upon each other for society, and everything else that makes life bearable, surely they must live in an atmosphere of peace directly opposed to the prosperity of a law court. Again, what malignant airs could blow illness and disorder 5000 feet above the sea?

We never knew how we found our way back to the inn through the darkness. An instinct, an unseen influence, guides our steps through life when we are most helpless. Once arrived we went about like midnight monks with lanterns, and the effect was rather picturesque. In these high latitudes, open to the winds of heaven, to cross courtyards with candles would be as effective as drawing buckets from empty wells.

"I feel like Diogenes," said H. taking up his lantern and leading the way. "And from all we have seen to-night, we should have as long a search for an honest man."

We were quite the last up. "All lights were out," our own excepted. Silence reigned. Above, as we crossed the open space, the stars flashed brightly, the sky looked "deeply, darkly blue." A solemn clock ought to have completed the effect by striking midnight upon the air; but in truth it was past the witching hour. And as we had to rise long before the lark, we felt it was time to enter upon the first of the two turns permitted by the great Duke and the little bed.

We seemed scarcely to have closed our eyes in delicious sleep when we were suddenly aroused by a lantern flashed in our face. Startled, wondering whether it was an earthquake, a deluge, or another war with the Boers, a mysterious whisper solved all doubt by declaring that it was half-past four and we had barely time to dress. The attentive landlord himself.

"The coach is worse than the train," he said. "The driver will not wait a moment after his team is harnessed. And you must make a good breakfast, for you have a long day and a rough one before you."

The second turn proved far harder work than the first; but as time and tide—and coaches—wait for no man, it had to be taken. It was certainly the most difficult task we have yet had to perform in South Africa. The morning was still perfectly dark and felt freezingly cold. So much so that when we crossed the courtyard to the breakfast-room with our lantern, our host good-naturedly offered to lend us an extra rug for the first part of the journey, to be delivered over to the returning coach which we should meet half way.

It was still perfectly dark when we went out to the waggon. We could not see the faces of our fellow-passengers, or how many there

MARKET SQUARE, JOHANNESBURG.

were, or whether there were any at all. We soon found that our corner-seats were appropriated, but on venturing politely to claim our own, there was an equally polite move, and the Boers went up not only in the coach but in our estimation. The Baroness was not with us this morning. She had declared a day's rest to be absolutely necessary after the fearful shocks and shakings she had sustained, and begged us to announce her arrival at Heath's Hotel in Johannesburg, the day after our own, and retain rooms for her. H. therefore felt that he might claim his corner.

The coach started in the darkness, away we went, and Standerton was soon, for us, a thing of the past. Gradually daylight broke, and we were soon in the enjoyment of one of the most magnificent sun-rises I ever saw, or ever shall see again. It was the very spot for such an effect: wide, far-reaching plains, the sky an unbroken dome.

And when daylight disclosed our fellow-travellers, we found we had the Bishop of Pretoria immediately opposite to us, who was visiting his diocese for purposes of Confirmation. We had looked forward to the day with some dread. Deprived of the charming society of the Baroness, the experience of fourteen or sixteen hours in a waggon with only Boers for "company," was anything but cheering; but the Bishop proved so delightful a companion; so full of anecdote and reminiscences both English and South African; with so thorough a knowledge of the country he had long inhabited; that the hours were winged and passed unconsciously. When the day was over we could say it was by far the pleasantest day's journey we had yet had under these southern skies.

The weather had improved. The wind had gone down—though it got up again very sensibly towards evening. As the sun rose higher in the heavens the air grew warm, extra rugs were discarded, and before noon we had midsummer heat upon us. But these extremes are not trying out here.

The country was also softer and prettier than yesterday. The tones were richer and the undulations were charming; a great deal of the land was evidently capable of cultivation. Now and then we crossed a river, whose course could always be marked by the trees growing on its banks—and for the most part growing nowhere else. Everywhere we had wide, barren sweeps. Here and there we found rich patches of heather, and in the depressions wild flowers grew in great beauty, but this was the exception. It was one unbroken stretch of splendid, desolate, undulating country. Occasionally in fording, we came to a standstill in the middle of the water; once thought we should have to get out and help to push on the waggon; once nearly turned over; but after a halt, a violent effort, a strong pull on the part of the team, we always managed to get through safely. Nothing happened. Here and there we sank deeply into marshy land, but somehow the brave team—always more or less of Pharaoh's lean description—brought us through.

We stopped at many stations to change cattle. Horses and mules were always of the same pattern; spiritless, as though protesting against fate. But as they looked neither worse nor better at the end of a long journey than at the beginning, it was evidently nothing but manner. We came to the conclusion that their lives were as happy, and no doubt as lengthened, as those of their hard-worked relatives in the streets of London: probably much more so.

Will the day ever come when these wide tracts of country are utilised? Will they become fertilised, cultivated, populated? Will great cities appear here and there to disturb the now unbroken line of horizon; to dim the clearness of the sky with the smoke of its fires—which is the incense of the world; to do away once and for ever with all this desolation that is so wonderful an experience, and seems such a waste of good, heaven-sent material?

Think of these millions upon millions of acres crying out to be used; and the thousands and thousands of voices pleading that they have nothing to do and know not where to turn. They will not put their hand to the plough; if it were otherwise, what a result have we here! Work, food, riches, a wholesome influence and a contented life for all the vast multitude of the "superfluous population;" and strikes, seditions, anarchy and revolutions might be things of the past. There would at least be an equality of happiness, though never as long as the world lasts will there be, could there or should there be, equality in anything else.

It proved a long, but a glorious drive: all sunshine and blue sky and fresh air; we revelled in oxygen only to be found 5000 feet above the ordinary level of mankind. The hours flew by, thanks to our unexpected and delightfully entertaining society; and whilst the worthy Boers slept we wandered in imagination over the realms of the wide wide world, through all the fields of literature and art, philosophy, theology and metaphysics: whilst, best of all, the Bishop had a fund of personal experience which never failed him; anecdotes of people, that, as Sydney Smith said, are always more interesting than trees; strange types of human nature, curious coincidences, and great adventures that are the invariable fruit of an active life and a fertile brain, and store themselves away in an unfailing and cultivated memory.

At length, about five o'clock in the evening, we reached Heidelberg, a small town very prettily situated, though very different from its German namesake.

Here we were to part with the Bishop, who was to hold a confirmation the next day. It was a small quiet place, still in the midst of the desert, as it were, though almost within the influence of the noisy world, for it is only 25 miles from Johannesburg and its rush and hurry of life. There is something very pastoral and sylvan about Heidelberg. It looks like a small place where every day should be a holiday, and all days Sunday; where people should live under the shadow of their own fig-trees, cultivating vines and eating the

fruit thereof; every Corydon a shepherd and every Phyllis bearing a crook. I don't know that it is quite all this, but its general aspect was certainly pleasing and peaceful.

We should have liked a longer stay here, for part of our limited time was spent in breaking our fast, and gathering fresh energy for the remainder of our journey. But you have learnt that coaches do not wait for passengers, and we were soon once more on the road. Our last impression of Heidelberg was the dignified figure of the Bishop standing motionless on the white thoroughfare, watching the coach and waving us a farewell as it disappeared in a cloud of sand; in the background the sylvan village, with its gardens and small waving trees, and a church spire rising above all, clearly outlined against the blue sky.

All this peace and harmony will probably some day dissolve and disappear. It is growing in size, for many invalids come to a place considered unusually healthy. It is also the very centre of the gold-bearing region, and possibly the mines will some day come up to its very doors. Then Heidelberg will cease to be beautiful.

The latter part of our journey was void of any great interest. A barren country with little to attract attention, met our view to right and left: long stretches of flat plains, beneath which no doubt repose treasures of gold that even Solomon never dreamed of, but that will one day be circulating through the world, for the benefit of lavish County Councils, Governments in Extremity, and Evicted Tenants.

The wind had once more risen, and every now and then we were pursued by a blinding sand-storm, before whose fury we had to hide our faces. The blasts, and the rough, uneven road, every now and then threatened to overturn us, but the catastrophe never quite happened. Long before Johannesburg was reached its indications were evident. Tall chimneys rose like steeples against the sky, which had lost some of its clear depth. We were presently surrounded by all the unromantic symptoms of a mining world. Ugly brick erections, miles of machinery; everything in the shape of green fields consigned to the desert; high grey mounds of slatey, stony refuse, wherein no doubt a diligent search and a keen eye would discern many a trace of gold. It was all rather a depressing influence to those who love "green fields and quiet neighbourhoods."

Certainly these will not be found in Johannesburg, as we soon discovered.

Yet it is a marvellous place when we remember that six or seven years ago not a trace of town or people or industry existed. The town seems to have grown up like a mushroom in the night, though by no means destined to a mushroom existence. Here in the midst of a desert rose this wonderful hive. All building material had to be brought from an immense distance, reminding one a little of the Egyptians of old, building the Pyramids. And verily we might call Johannesburg a modern Cairo or Memphis, stripped of all beauty and romance. The atmosphere of the town is distinctly common-

place and commercial. The artistic and the beautiful are not recognised. Every man one meets seems thoroughly in earnest, but it is the earnestness of trade and commerce. One great element to be seen is the feverishness of speculation. Many a face looks anxious, eager; elated or depressed according to the rise and fall of his own particular interest. The eyes look restless, the walk is hurried; scarcely can time be devoted to meals; the expression of the gambler is unmistakable.

But these though in greatest number, are not the responsible, legitimate and establ shed business men of Johannesburg, whose

First Grave of the Prince Imperial.

enterprises are gigantic, and whose work is unquestionable: who are consolidating the future and fortunes of the South African mining world, and who, if they reap a rich harvest thoroughly deserve it.

Everything connected with mines is more or less an "adventure," subject to risks and fluctuations; the prosperity of to-day may mean the ruin of to-morrow, involving the welfare of the most upright and conscientious citizen. It must always be a more or less feverish atmosphere in which to live, involving a wear and tear of nervous tissue that only the very strongest can equably sustain. Well that there are those who possess this tough constitutional fibre, or Johannesburg to-day would be non-existent.

Though we entered this town when the shades of night were falling, and business was over, still it was evident that its population was energetic and excitable; living the life of those whose daily question is "What will turn up to-morrow?" And whose morrow has all the feverish charms of uncertainty, all the possibilities of a lottery. A great prize may be drawn at any moment. A man may wake up one morning to find himself not famous but fabulously rich. It has its bad side, this uncertain element of chance, encouraging the presence of an army of unprincipled speculators, who are the bane of all legitimate enterprise.

Of all places in South Africa we think Johannesburg the most wonderful and we have enjoyed it the least. We feel entirely out of harmony with its atmosphere. When the lumbering waggon with its weary team, in which we travelled for some fourteen hours, stopped at the coach office, a small excited crowd surrounded us. Peace and repose were evidently at an end for the present. After the quietude of Pietermaritzburg, the solitariness of Charlestown, the two days' desert drive, we had come back to the world: a world full of life and rush and activity.

The day was far spent when we finally parted company with the waggon that had gone through many hair-breadth escapes yet had landed us safely at last. It was the gloaming hour, and the evening light toned down the commonplace angles and aspect of this new and flourishing beehive. The bees who surrounded the waggon eyed us curiously, evidently trying to make out whether we were flowers from whom they could extract honey and sweetness, or whether we were wasps intent on plunder.

A very few minutes brought us to Heath's Hotel, which takes precedence of all others. We found it larger and rather more pretentious than those we had yet frequented, but far less comfortable. There is no system about it. It is loud, and all noise and rush. Crowded with the class to which we have referred—the adventurers, who by their eager eyes and restless manner are evidently living the feverish life of the uncertain speculator. There is a slight *East London* air about the hotel: you have to look after your own interests to a great extent: the responsible heads have too much general work to do to look after individual claims and wishes. They have a way too of charging so much a day for each visitor, no matter how little the hotel may be used: and we who merely sleep and breakfast there, find our bill at the end of a few days has risen to many pounds. Nevertheless, it is the best of the Johannesburg hotels. The town will no doubt improve in this respect as time goes on.

That Johannesburg has become what it is in the space of seven years, fairly entitles it to be considered an eighth wonder of the world.

In the spring of 1886 there was nothing here but wide sandy plains; a desert waste; vestiges of creation, but not a trace of humanity. Then through the air went whispers of gold-mines; of

JOHANNESBURG.

buried wealth only waiting enterprise. A new gold fever sprang up. In the autumn of that year, a few wooden shanties appeared on this elevated plateau, now the celebrated Witwatersrand district, of which the wealth seems long-enduring, inexhaustible. A bleak, barren spot, far and wide; where nothing would grow; where even cattle could not graze; where farms were not valued at a team of oxen; as though Nature knew what she was about and would not waste her resources. The treasures and harvests of the land were hidden in the depths below—therefore the surface should be unfruitful. Sandstorms swept over the plains at the rising of the wind; and they are still the plague and misery of Johannesburg. The natives perhaps get used to them —though they are said to develop diseases of the eyes and throat peculiar to the place; but to the visitor of a few days or weeks they are intolerable.

The more we see of Johannesburg, the more we wonder and admire —from an enterprising point of view, never from an artistic or refined. It has long, straight, wide streets, and many of them. The by-thoroughfares are rough, irregular and undulating, guiltless of pavement and macadam; uneven roadways over which the sandstorms sweep at the smallest wind-provocation. It still looks very like a town in the midst of a desert—as in fact it is.

Yet it possesses everything it needs.

Two railway stations, which perhaps are the least meritorious of all their buildings, and certainly are strangely manned and managed as we have found on experience. The shops equal any to be seen anywhere, resplendent with plate-glass and the last new fashions. The public buildings are all up to date, excepting the Post Office which no doubt will soon be rebuilt on diminished lines of St. Martin le Grand. It is still a shabby, cramped erection, with numerous "dependencies." No wonder, when we consider that in 1887 two clerks did all the work, and still found time hang heavily on their hands; and five years later sixty clerks were employed night and day in the telegraph department alone.

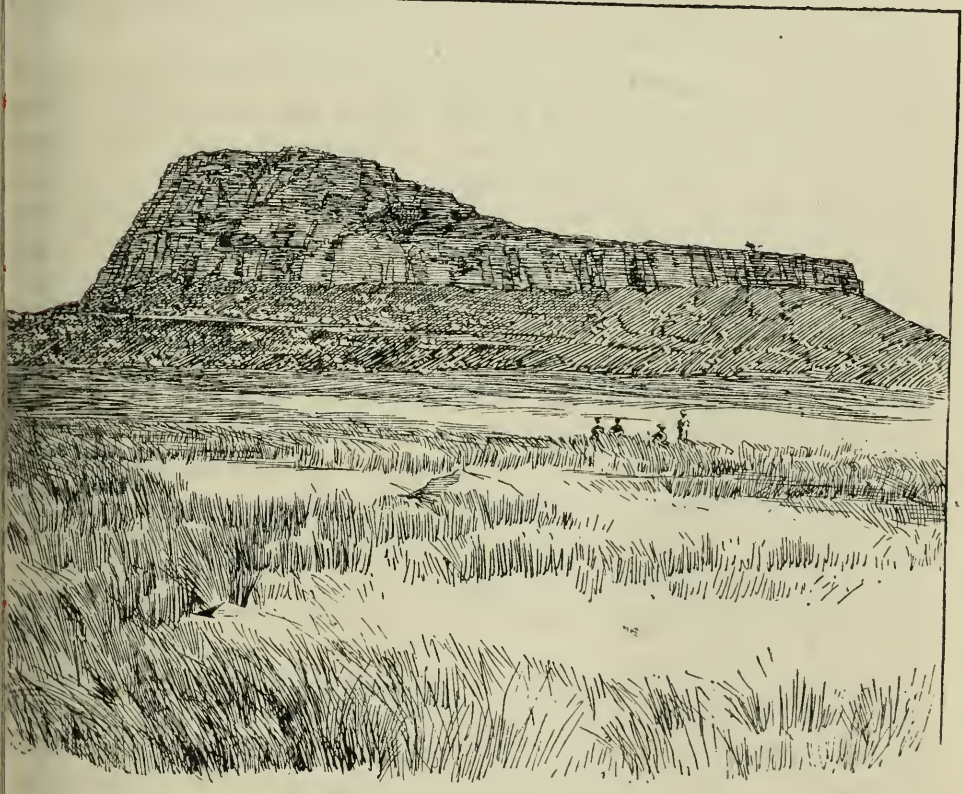
The Market Square is the largest in South Africa; and when, on certain days it is filled with carts and cattle, it is a sight not to be forgotten. Picturesque, too, in its way, with its horned, meek-eyed oxen and interesting waggons; especially so, if one has only to admire and not use them. There are other large squares, well planned; and through many of the streets crowded tramways run to and fro.

The admirable Stock Exchange is a scene, it may well be affirmed, of greater excitement and commotion than any similar building in Europe. There the days of eagerness and anxiety are the times of crisis: but in Johannesburg every day might be an impending crisis. The Club is large, well planned and well supported—and appears to us very well managed. We find it a great refuge from the uncomfortable hotel. There is a large hospital, built at great expense, with

very possible appliance for the poor. Churches are many, and there s an imposing Jewish Synagogue. Of course the town has gas and he electric light, and theatres and other places of amusement.

Yet seven years ago, as we have said, there was not the faintest sign f even a shanty; and the first whisper had not been heard of what as so soon to be.

Is it not right therefore that it should rank as a wonder—this far-ff town in the midst of a desert, and that honour to whom honour due should be rendered: the wonderful men, who by unconquer-ble energy and enterprise have achieved the impossible, and stablished all the wonders of the Arabian Nights?



ISANDHLWANA.

Of course the whole town has a very South African aspect. Its general impression is light rather than solid, as though it had been lt for time, not for endurance. It rather gives one the impression we have said of having sprung up in a night, like a mushroom. ny of its buildings might be marked *fragile*, like those packages rail and steamer that as a rule are the most roughly handled. st of its architectural features are modest; there is a want of tinuity about them. Three or four wooden erections will be ceeded by a pretentious stone edifice. The one is destined to ain, the other to pass away. It may safely be affirmed that he visits Johannesburg ten years hence, will find few traces of to-day.

It will then be important and imposing, more nearly approaching the modern Memphis we have compared it to: and its temples will be underground, and its obelisks will be factory chimneys. These are the features of the 19th century; and in the year 4000 these will be its "buried treasures."

During the working hours of the day, the business streets are crowded. Men are running to and fro, all eagerness and excitement. If you venture to stop one of them in his hurried march, to ask your way perhaps, he has not time to tell you; he frowns you aside and leaves you to sad reflections upon the race for wealth.

At a street corner, a man on a platform—which may be a chair or an empty beer barrel—is conducting an auction to an eager crowd. He is selling mining shares, or getting up betting transactions on an approaching race, or otherwise gambling. His voice grates upon you as you stand and listen, and watch the faces, and mark expressions that you would rather not see on any human countenance; whilst the auctioneer himself very often looks like the bird of prey contemplating his victim.

These things must be. The opportunity always furnishes its victims. In such a town as Johannesburg the bad must be taken with the good. There are the tempters and the tempted. There is much that the legitimate men of business, with high and honourable aims, would put down if it were possible. But the wheat and the tares must grow together. The vast army of small gamblers and speculators must have their day. They disappear, and others only take their place. Panics, and times of depression, and failures of good men who ought to have succeeded, are often the result; this has been and will be again, to the end of time and speculation. It is one of the evils under the sun; and a new world of enterprise such as Johannesburg, is the very paradise of men who, having nothing to lose, fear no risk.

So they dress themselves up in their lion's skin, which does not conceal the ass, but something very different, and go forth in search of victims. And peradventure they sometimes succeed. And one success encourages ten thousand to try their own fortune, but not to all, and not to many, is given *la main heureuse.*

It is this element, so apparent in Johannesburg, that is so distasteful to us, so almost unendurable. Fortunately we brought introductions to those who have proved kindly and hospitable friends; and so far our recollections of the place are such as we should like to renew. But for the rest, it is an atmosphere altogether different from anything else we have met with in South Africa.

It is also our first experience of *a town of adventure;* where men congregate who live by their wits; by what chance may throw up; by the fortunes of gambling, and it so grates upon one that we feel like the fretful porcupine whenever we come in sight of the hurrying crowd

vhilst our dreams at night are haunted by restless eyes and pale nd eager faces, and phantoms that pursued a shadow.

You thoroughly understand that we are not referring to the egitimate traders of Johannesburg, men of integrity, of energy and ubstance, who are doing a necessary and a great work; but to that ast army of outsiders, who swarm to these districts, who are most in vidence in the public thoroughfares where chiefly their work is lone; and who are the bane and hindrance of honest enterprise.

We have said that Johannesburg is a town in the midst of a desert, ut great efforts are being made to render its immediate suburbs reen, fertile and productive.

In these suburbs most of the rich miners and speculators live. hey inhabit low houses, still of the bungalow type; many rooms n one floor; one room leading into another; a verandah often unning round the whole house, where in summer evenings each may t under the shadow of his own vine and smoke the calumet of peace, nd watch his olive branches growing up around him.

Here the man of hard work revives his energies for the next day. he rush and roar of the town, the feverish excitement of uncertainty, f fluctuating prices, of conflicting reports as to "strata" and the rospect of "returns"—all this falls from him and is forgotten under ie influence of domestic happiness. He raises his eyes and finds imself surrounded by a lovely garden where gorgeous flowers, some f them sweet-scented, have been made to grow after infinite pains id time and nursing.

Nothing here can be accomplished without trouble. No sluggard's fe is that of the Johannesburg mine owner or director. It is true, ow and then a fabulous amount of wealth seems to fall into the lap some favourite of fortune, unexpectedly, unsolicited, without trouble. man not the certain possessor of a shilling yesterday, has been nown to own half a million to-day. But these are the exceptions at prove the rule. As the uncertainties are boundless, so are the ossibilities. "I lost £100,000 in that mine," said a speculator to e one day at the Rand Club: a stranger who happened to be near e in the Reading Room, and with whom I had half an hour's instruc-ve conversation. "But what is that? I shall get it all back again. atch the market, and when you see so-and-so, you may know at I have regained my loss twice over."* And so great are the iances of this mining war, that very often they do get it back, metimes with compound interest.

To return to our suburbs.

If it were not for this daily, or rather, nightly withdrawal from verish influences, many a head and nervous system would break own under the unhealthy strain it has to undergo day after day, year

* We did this, and in due time had the pleasure of seeing this gentle-an's hopes realised. If we mistake not his gains were greater than he nticipated.

after year: periods of failure as well as success. But at home in the suburbs it is a new world and another life. Everything speaks of repose. His next-door neighbour is separated by a sufficient interval. He is not in evidence. Before him is a wide, undulating plain, the stretches of country that surround Johannesburg. Above him is the eternal sky, vast, blue, and serene. Night falls and the stars come out in the deep dark, and flash with a brilliancy unknown to heavier climes. He is 6000 feet above the level of the sea and breathes an air which makes him feel vigorous and light-hearted. Anything in the way of despondency must be actually cultivated as a luxury; left to itself it will not take root. He feels as if he were perpetually inhaling champagne—if the paradox may be allowed. There comes to him that delightful sensation, "All men may be mortal, but I cannot be."

This is the realisation of perfect health. Such man was intended to be, but such he rarely is. We have strung too highly this harp of a thousand strings, it is too often out of tune, and gives forth discord where all should have been divinest harmony. For this we were intended, created; but, alas, we have fallen from our first estate, and the wrong will only be righted, and perfection, mental, moral and physical, will only come in that day when man can say with truth, "I am not mortal."

The Johannesburg merchant raises his eyes, and sweeps the wide surrounding plains.

It is a very different plain now from what it was seven years ago; at least in the immediate surroundings. Much that is beautiful and luxuriant now meets the vision. Vast market gardens have been laid out, and after endless difficulties fruit and flowers are growing in abundance. Myriads of trees have been planted that in twenty years' time will have grown up into wide-spreading forests. Even to-day the eye rests upon much beauty of verdure and vegetation. The undulations are deep and marked. The whole aspect of the surrounding country is changing from a barren waste into a luxuriant garden. Wealth and happiness will follow.

All this is due to the indomitable perseverance of man. It is not every one who cares for the feverish, unromantic life inseparable from the mining world. To some natures the occupation would be slow torture, purgatory. But a world is taking root here, and for the sons that are growing up like the young trees of the forest it is well to have a choice of labour. And the day is coming when Johannesburg will have its west end of beauty to counterbalance its east end of unsightly mining operations: when flowering and fruitful gardens and waving woods on the right hand, will atone for the tall chimneys and mining structures and refuse heaps on the left—influences which are so depressing to those who chiefly love the beauties of nature banks whereon the wild thyme grows and rivers that flow shining to the sea.

GOLD MINES, JOHANNESBURG.

To some of these suburban homes we were admitted by the open-sesame of introductions, and were able to judge of their calmness and repose; the even tenour of every evening after the day's labour. We saw there were great capacities here for beauty of life: for almost the simplicity of patriarchal times.

It is quite a world apart, this life and atmosphere in Johannesburg. We have nothing corresponding to it in England. Essentially colonial, it has yet all the mental activity and excitement which characterises our chief European capitals. But Johannesburg has more: it has its quiet, delightful suburb, and its 6000 feet of elevation. Whatever its people may be, its habitations at least are nearer heaven than we are: and if a sound mind in a sound body means anything, it is their own fault if they are not better than their less favoured, more lowly placed brethren.

It is indeed difficult to overestimate the influence of this serene atmosphere. To be always living 6000 feet in the air is a state of things that an unhappy Londoner who has never penetrated beyond Brighton or Epping Forest cannot realise. It is something unknown to him, like the mysteries of freemasonry to an outsider, or the song of the birds to the deaf.

The lightness of the air gives you a sense of flying. You walk, it is true, but the feet scarcely seem to touch the ground. A very little more and you feel that you would soar into ether. Unfortunately that very little more never comes, but the sense of exhilaration is always there. It is the very place for those who are constitutionally without hope, whilst those of a sanguine temperament have to take strong hold of their reason. Everything is seen through *couleur de rose*. Many people constantly go through the world expecting each fresh undertaking will turn out in their favour; for them a miracle will happen. This is essentially true of high latitudes, where the glorious oxygen sends the healthy blood coursing through the veins at 90 pulsations a minute.

Artificial stimulants are unneeded; the nervous power is sufficiently stimulated by the air; there is no craving brought on by exhaustion; the system does not fall into the condition familiarly described as a "peg too low." As a consequence we noticed that four people out of five drank water, and this is a wholesome sign. It may have been economy on the part of many, but we preferred to think it inclination. There are exceptions of course, but human nature as a rule falls because it is tempted—and is weak. Many do not fall though they are weak—because they are not tempted. It is those who are tempted and resist that are the exceptional salt of the earth: the righteous for whom peradventure some would even dare to die. Man seldom wilfully and deliberately rushes into wrong-doing, or that which is inconvenient. It is not the love of sin which makes the sinner. Opportunity and temptation forge the first links in the chain, and very often those first links are absolutely without attraction.

And as far as mental excitement goes, there is no need for stimulant in Johannesburg. It has it in abundance in its daily work; stimulant of the very highest and most feverish description, to which the addition of a little more would be madness to those who speculate. They are wise enough to know that it is only the cool heads which keep above the water: and they are strong enough to resist.

This calm suburban atmosphere where evening after evening the calumet of peace is lighted, whose smoke goes up as incense towards heaven—the incense of rest and repose, and in many instances, we discovered, of gratitude—was not our only experience of Johannesburg. As, mentally, in these high latitudes we soared above the world into light and ether on the one hand, so on the other we went down into darkness and the depths of the earth. It was a counter-balancing influence, lest we should leave this new creation in too exalted a frame of mind. And yet in these depths lay all the mystery and charm and explanation of the visible results we have described: and these depths were the most wonderful part of it all.

The principal owner of one of the largest mines in the neighbourhood very kindly proposed and arranged to take us down one morning, that we might judge of the marvels going on in these secret and invisible depths: the results of hard work and energy and perseverance; the wonders of engineering skill; the secret supplies of gold that will probably give work and wealth to thousands for generations yet unborn, for centuries to come.

We had once declared that we would never again go down a mine. Once in Staffordshire we had been in danger, and once in Cornwall in jeopardy; and having escaped in both instances, we said *It is enough.*

In the latter instance they have the system of the "man-ladder," where each man goes down separately and alone. Presence of mind is essential, and our mind being too often absent without leave, we fell into dangerous straits. We were visiting our friend the Rector of Falmouth, that giant in intellect amongst men, whose heart was as great as his head, and of which heart we possessed so large a portion. He, with the Captain of the mine, was looking anxiously down from above; and before we had descended six stages, there came an agonised cry from the Rector: "For the love of heaven, come back." And from the Captain's stentorian lungs: "Come back, sir, come back, or you are a dead man."

And with bruised back and battered hat we returned to earth and daylight—a poor-looking object. The Rector almost commanded a public thanksgiving, and the Captain, not without some emotion, said: "You may thank heaven, sir, that your life is spared. With these man-ladders, sharp's the word, all your wits about you, and bolt upright all the time: otherwise you and death will travel together."

So we hesitated a moment when our Johannesburg friend offered to escort us down his own mine. But upon his declaring that danger was non-existent we felt refusal would mean the merest superstition. Johannesburg was many a thousand miles from Cornwall; we were bound not to leave its chief wonders unexplored. The more so that the terrible gale which had lost us two days in that hope-forsaken East London, has compelled us to give up a visit to the diamond mines of Kimberley.

So we closed with the offer, and one fine morning we started.

We had only a short drive to the mine, but we looked upon it in the light of an excursion or adventure. The latter it might indeed prove, but we took our courage in both hands and went boldly forward.

Not here was the country green and luxuriant. No suburban villas in the midst of flowering gardens ministered to nightly repose and the incense-breathing pipe. No well stocked gardens yielded fruit and vegetables—those commodities that are so necessary, and still such costly luxuries in Johannesburg. There were no waving forests of young trees, full of promise for another generation. Before us we saw nothing but a barren and a prosy world, without charm or romance. Stern fact and reality stared us in the face; but it is a "gilded sorrow" after all, and that to some is an ample compensation.

Tall chimneys met the gaze; large buildings of dull brick; a multitude of sheds; workshops for the smiths and fitters, carpenter's shops, foundries; wheels that had some mysterious connection with underground workings; heaps of refuse, from which gold had been extracted and from which siftings might still be taken; yawning excavations propped up with beams of timber, slanting gradually down into unseen recesses—the bowels of the earth, where a busy human hive was very literally earning its daily bread by the sweat of its brow: the result not only of hard work, but of heat and a close atmosphere. The aspect of the Rand—these gold-fields—is not that of the Black Country of England, nor anything half so bad. There is a great difference between a coal mine and a gold mine: as much difference as there is between a chimney sweeper and a labourer of the soil. Here the general tone is a dull grey or brown; there is no blackness of night upon the face of things, with its corresponding depression.

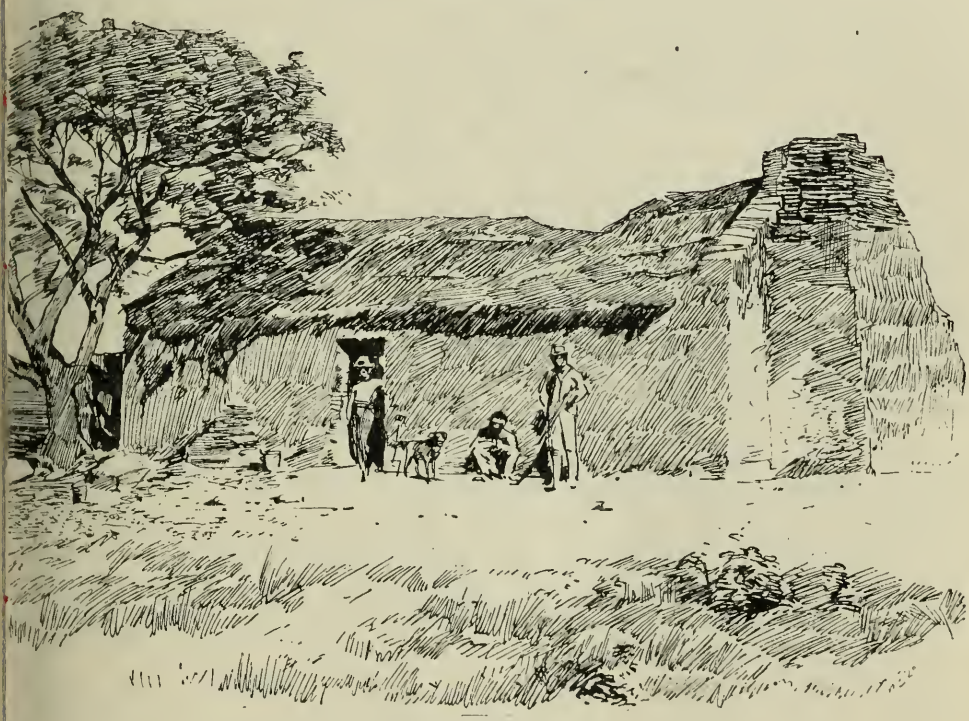
Arrived at our destination we dressed ourselves up like guys, as if it had been a Fifth of November, and our best friends would not have known us.

Then we packed into the cage, and commenced the awful descent. "Facilis descensus averni," quoted our guiding friend, airing his Virgil; but we could not agree; it was all hard work and thrilling emotion. We were much more inclined to exclaim: "All those who enter here leave hope behind." The burnt child dreads the fire.

Down we went, going through the agony of that first thrilling moment when the earth seems to slip from beneath your feet, and

chaos has come again. The bolt is drawn, the fatal plunge has been taken; there is no turning back—as happily there was in the Cornish mine.

Daylight disappeared; darkness came on. Presently, looking up, we saw a far-off glimmer, a cube of blue sky; and still we descended. "Delicious!" exclaimed our guide, and we felt ourselves turn pale. We had known cases of sudden madness coming on in going down a mine shaft—was this a case in point? "Delicious!" he continued. "These are the regions of fairyland!" The madness was becoming alarming. "Here we construct palaces of silver and halls of gold—I speak metaphorically, you will understand." And we saw there was great reason and method in his madness.



First House on the Rand: 1887.

We reached the end of our perilous journey. Suddenly the narrow shaft opened out into an excavated chamber, and if this was fairyland we could only say, "give us our own again." We passed through a sort of turnstile, and were immediately surrounded by beings who if they were fairies certainly looked very evil ones. They carried candles and torches, which threw gleams of light and strong shadows upon the walls of this subterranean temple; and showed up their dark faces in strong contrast. Demon eyes seemed to glare upon us and wide mouths and grinning teeth made our blood run cold.

This was only a first impression coming out of the darkness of the shaft after the bewildering descent. We soon found that we were

still amongst mortals, and in good and kindly hands anxious to do their best for us.

"I fear, sirs, that we shall give you only too warm a welcome," said the director or engineer of the mine, an important post carrying a large stipend.

And certainly we felt many degrees hotter than when we had left the world behind us. Yet everything is done in the way of ventilation that is possible. There are magnificent air-shafts at frequent intervals; there are great spaces communicating directly with the outer surface—we have seen the yawning chasms propped by timbers and the native miners certainly wear no superfluous clothing. The electric light looked the most fairy-like element we saw in this abode of darkness, and must be a great boon. The natives were so much the colour of the walls that we often mistook the one for the other: and now and then treading upon what we supposed to be a stone, found it to be a copper-coloured foot, whose owner, suddenly looming out of the darkness like a phantom, seemed rather to enjoy the joke.

It was a curious experience. The passages seemed endless: excavations that had all been blasted out and then formed with pickaxes. We saw for ourselves the different strata of rock and stone, and were explained their mysteries. Veins or particles of gold ran here and there, and these little veins are the *raison d'être* of the mines, the cause of all this new and wonderful world of industry. Wherever they were found, the pickaxe followed. We often had to splash through pools of water, and very soon appreciated the Guy Fawkes element in our attire. Occasionally the passage opened out into a chamber, and every chamber had its name. Here and there we came to an excavation which almost had the appearance of a forge. Tram-rails ran through the passages and here came to an end. It was a "terminus," with a shaft leading to the outer world. Men, black and white were grouped about; the white decently clothed, the black almost naked, looking like great overgrown monkeys, with glaring eyes and grinning teeth. Shovels and pickaxes lay in every direction, and broken pieces of rock: all signs and symbols of the work constantly going on.

The mine after all, was very much like other mines; less black than coal, but scarcely more alluring. We enjoyed the visit, but were not sorry when we found ourselves back at our starting-point, and the order was given for a return to light and earth and air.

For the most wonderful part is above ground, not below it. The engine-rooms, so beautifully kept, working so smoothly: one engine sometimes being the motive power for the whole mine. The immense batteries, with their endless and complicated machinery, yet every wheel and rod and wire doing its exact work, under perfect control These enormous batteries are in themselves a marvellous sight showing forth the power and ingenuity of man, all his constructive ability, proving over and over again that necessity is the

mother of invention. The noise in these batteries ought to make the deaf hear, or wake the Seven Sleepers. It is more than bewildering; it is terrifying, and seems to penetrate into the innermost recesses of your brain. In vain your guide shouts into your ear, not a word is heard. A truck full of stone ore runs along an upper platform and suddenly the whole is turned into a huge receptacle, and is immediately seized upon by stamps of enormous power that crush it to pieces, whence it passes on mechanically into other departments and through other processes, until finally the gold is separated from the dross and the work is done. And it is impossible to say how many trucks are being poured in at the same moment, and how many stamps are crushing and grinding the ore.

It is all a marvellous discovery, a stupendous industry: giving work to thousands of hands, and work that is well paid. The white miners receive from £4 10*s.* to £6 a week; smiths and carpenters from £5 to £6 a week; and if they do not live contented and abundant lives, it is their own fault.

Perhaps only after visiting these mines does one realise what a tremendous, substantial and abiding labour has been here established. The tin mines of Cornwall are said to have existed in the days of Solomon and are still working, and there seems no reason why in an equal number of centuries to come, these South African mines should not be giving wealth and work to the world. Unless it has entered into a state of existence when gold is accounted as nothing worth, like the silver of the days we have alluded to.

That seems scarcely probable. Both in sacred and profane history, gold appears to be the *Ultima Thule* of all precious metals, beyond which there is no passing. It is the lever of the world; and let us hope, in the day of its great abundance, that the love of it will no longer be the root of all evil.

MADAME.

By Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler.

"MORECOMB GRANGE is let at last," said my father as he came into the oak parlour where my mother and I were sitting at our sewing one evening early in the seventies, just after the conclusion of the Franco-German war.

Mother and I looked up with much interest, as no event could seem insignificant in so quiet and secluded a life as ours.

"It is a dreary old place; who has taken it, Roger?" asked my mother.

"Your ladyship is curious," said father, rubbing his hands together in his delight at tantalising us.

"Oh! tell us, father," I cried impatiently; "we are longing to know. Please don't tease us."

"Well then," answered my father, "as I am strong I will be merciful, and I will not keep from you any longer the morsel of news for which I see you are both hungering. Morecomb Grange is let to a Monsieur Grammont, who has forsaken his native land since her conquest by Germany, and prefers the 'wise passiveness' of England to the wars and tumults of 'la belle France.'"

"Is he old or young? Is he married or single?" cried mother and I in a breath.

"I will tell you all I know about him if you will only give me time. He is old, and has a very beautiful wife a great deal younger than himself, and they have no children. This is the extent of my knowledge concerning Monsieur Grammont, so don't bother me with any more questions about him, Miss Phyllis."

Whereupon I, finding that no further information was forthcoming, stole away into the picture-gallery to gaze at my favourite picture, and to build castles in the air for the habitation of our new neighbours. I was quite a young girl at that time, and a very lonely young girl; for I was the only child of Sir Roger and Lady Treherne. Treherne Court lay in a very quiet locality, the only neighbouring house (Morecomb Grange) having been untenanted ever since I could remember. Consequently

> "I lived with visions for my company
> Instead of men and women, years ago."

And I think that on the whole these visions afforded me as much pleasure, and considerably less pain, than the more substantial companions of later days. So my childhood was a happy though a

solitary one ; and I dwelt apart in a world of my own, peopled by the creatures of my imagination.

There was one picture in the gallery at Treherne Court which took a great hold upon me, and attracted me with an intense though weird fascination. It was a scene in the French Revolution. A beautiful young girl was being led to the guillotine, whilst an old man stopped her progress and bargained with her murderers for her life. The girl in her white gown, and the old man in his black velvet robe and skull cap, formed a marked contrast to the drunken soldiers and infuriated mob, and it was a striking picture ; but it was the story connected with it that so completely enthralled my childish imagination. Which story ran as follows :—

Ursule de Brie was a daughter of the aristocracy, and one of the victims of the Reign of Terror. All her family had perished on the scaffold, and the same fate was about to be awarded to her, when a strange old man, reported to be a wizard and an astrologer, who was a friend of Robespierre's, begged for her life on scientific grounds. This terrible old man had long studied medicine, and had tortured countless living creatures in his search for knowledge. But brute hearts had failed to tell him all that he longed to know ; and consequently he craved for a human victim whereby to unravel the ghastly secrets of nature. Ursule de Brie was young and strong and healthy, a subject after his own heart and ready to his hand ; so he begged for her life and the boon was granted to him. Poor Ursule was carried away to his laboratory, there to suffer a far more awful doom than the swift and sure stroke of the guillotine could ever have meted out ; and the laboratory kept its gruesome secret, and none knew exactly how Mademoiselle de Brie had perished. It was a horrible story, and used to fill my childish mind with morbid imaginings as to what hideous tortures that tenderly-nurtured girl must have endured before death mercifully ended her agonies. The very vagueness of her fate added to its horror.

But a healthier phase of life was destined to begin for me when the Grammonts came to live at Morecomb Grange. The shadowy Ursule de Brie ceased to be the central figure in the romances I loved to weave, and was gradually ousted from her place in my thoughts by the real and living charms of Madame Grammont. Even now I could not give a cool and calm description of the mistress of Morecomb Grange, for I fell over head and ears in love with her, as young girls often do fall in love with women considerably older than themselves : and everything she was and said and did was illumined to my eyes by

"The light that never was on sea or land."

The sound of her voice and the touch of her hand made life seem to me like some lovely midsummer-night's dream ; and wherever she was became at once an earthly Paradise. The rooms she lived

in, and the books she read, are even now, in my eyes, unlike any other rooms and books in the whole world, so intense was the charm of her personality: and yet it is nearly twenty years since she was laid to rest beneath the shadow of Morecomb Church.

When Madame Grammont came to live in our neighbourhood she was a well-preserved woman of apparently fifty years of age; but her husband looked at least twenty years older. They had been married over thirty years. Madame was very tall and slight, and her dark hair was barely touched with grey. Her black eyes were wonderful; and were set off by the marble whiteness of her complexion, which never had the least tinge of colour to relieve its intense pallor. Her features were perfect in their regularity; and altogether she was a most beautiful woman.

But her manners were even more charming than her appearance: there was the stateliness of the *ancien régime* about her which was highly *distingué*, and she was the perfection of a *grande dame*. To the last she was thoroughly French; and when surrounded by the wives of our county magnates, used to look like a tall white lily in a garden of cabbage-roses. But she was a lily which could not flourish in our cold English climate; and after three winters at Morecomb Grange she slowly drooped and died, leaving me to feel that some nameless charm and graciousness had passed out of the world, and that life could never be quite the same to me again.

There are ready-made niches in one's heart that will hold almost any image: and when one idol falls out of them, another is quickly found to take its place: but there are other niches made to order to fit some special figure, and when that figure is removed no other can ever fill the vacant space. The niche which Madame Grammont occupied in my heart was of the latter sort; doubtless the better sort too; but a sort that it does not do to indulge in too freely; or else as life goes on one's heart becomes nothing but a desolate temple lined with empty shrines.

How happy I was when Madame first came to Morecomb! She was then (as she always will be) my ideal of perfect womanhood; and she soon became the *première danseuse* on the stage of my girlish imagination. What long and delightful talks she and I used to have together! Their sweetness abides with me still, like the sweetness of long-dead rose-leaves. One day she rebuked me, I remember, for saying that I should hate to grow old.

"Little one," she said, stroking my hair tenderly, "there is no such thing as growing old really. How long one has lived in the world is an accident, and is of no matter to anybody. But age is a question of character: some people seem to begin life at fifty, while others live for eighty years, and yet are never more than eighteen. When I meet new people, I look to see how old they are: how long they have been plodding through this vale of tears does not interest me in the least."

"How old am I according to your reckoning?" I asked laughing.

"You, my Phyllis, are twenty-eight. You have only happened to

live for fifteen years, I know, but you have the thoughtfulness and tenderness of a woman. When you have lived seventy years you will still be twenty-eight."

"And what is my mother?" I further inquired.

"Ah! Lady Treherne is forty. I have no doubt that she was forty when she was quite a little girl, and trained up all her dolls most strictly in the way they should go. I once knew a child who got up early every morning so that her dolls should have a grammar-lesson before breakfast: now she is as excellent a mother as Lady Treherne."

"And my father?"

"Your father, sweet one, is young, very young—not more than nineteen, I should say."

"Yet he is really five years older than mother."

"But that is nothing, silly child. Now my husband seems old to you, but he was just as old when I married him thirty years ago, when really he was only forty. He is no older at seventy than he was then. I once met a man who lived to be eighty-three, and yet he was never more than six. He was very tiresome. I should have boxed his ears, only I was afraid of being reprimanded for cruelty to children."

"How old are you, dear Madame?" I asked, fondling her beautiful white hands.

"In my heart I am twenty, as I was at my dear old home. But my real age—as men count age—I should be afraid to tell you, little one: you would say I was too old to be a friend of yours."

Whereupon I fell to kissing my adored Madame, and assuring her that if she were a hundred she would always be young and beautiful to me.

One evening when the Grammonts were dining with us, my father and Madame quarrelled laughingly over the merits and demerits of country-life; he expatiated upon the delight of rural pleasures, and she complained of their dulness.

"I hate them," she said decidedly; "in fact I think I hate all the things that Wordsworth raved about. Mountain-streams and pet-lambs and weathercocks are alike abominable in my sight. They one and all bore me to death."

"You have a great dread of being bored, Madame," said my father.

"I have indeed—it is the *bête noire* of my existence. I often think how ghastly it would be if my husband began to bore me, there would be no relief from him at that dreary Morecomb."

"I hope I don't bore you, dear?" said Monsieur Grammont smiling.

"Not yet, but you came perilously near to it that night that Mr. Grazebrook dined with us, and you let him talk about potatoes."

"Did Grazebrook talk to you about potatoes?" exclaimed my father chuckling. "How exactly like him."

"Oh! Sir Roger, he was terrible," cried Madame. "He told us all about his potato-crops, and called them by their names, and

showed forth which kinds were best—and when—and where—and why. It was sickening! I have the greatest respect for potatoes myself in their proper place, but I could never be intimate with them and call them by their Christian names. But Mr. Grazebrook seemed to make quite friends of them—'Dunbar Regents' and 'Newcastle Champions' were his special favourites. I believe he could publish a *Peerage* of potatoes, and a *Landed Gentry* of peas."

"I wish I had been there," said my father, still shaking with laughter; "I should have liked to see your face whilst the bucolic and unconscious Grazebrook held forth on his favourite subjects."

"Two of the principal things in life," continued Madame Grammont meditatively, "are to keep one's self from being bored, and to retain one's ideals."

"For the latter," joined in my mother, "I suppose it is necessary to marry one's first love, and have things pretty much as one wants; otherwise, people become bitter and discontented, and their ideals grow sour from keeping."

"You are right, Frances," agreed my father. "I always think that disappointed people must soon become horribly disillusioned and realistic."

"Then you are quite wrong, both of you," cried our fair guest with her wonted animation. "It is by *not* marrying one's first love and by *not* obtaining one's heart's desire, that one's ideals are preserved intact."

"I don't see that," objected her host.

"Well then, I will just show you, Sir Roger, what I mean. Take an instance. Mary Ann, we will say, is your first love; in the days of your youth you firmly believe that life will be a chronic paradise if only you can marry Mary Ann; that is your ideal of perfect felicity. You do what you want and Mary Ann is yours. Then, of course, you gradually become disillusioned, and discover that your quondam goddess is a most commonplace woman. Where is your ideal then? You find that even Mary Ann had become stupid and tiresome; so you wring your hand and cry aloud that the world is hollow and all your dolls are stuffed with sawdust. But suppose, on the other hand, that a cruel fate separates you and Mary Ann in the earliest days of your love-making. You get over it in time and marry Eliza. It is then Eliza's place to grow commonplace and stupid and tiresome, which she accordingly does. But your ideal is left to you all the same. You say, 'Eliza is stupid, and life is dull; but the world is not altogether hollow, for Mary Ann never was stuffed with sawdust.' And so as long as you live you retain your ideal of Mary Ann."

"Your 'wise saws' are only rivalled by your 'modern instances,' dear Madame," cried father. "You make me quite regret that I married my first love," he added, looking fondly across the table at my mother.

But mother only smiled.

"If, as my wife admits," said Monsieur Grammont in his deliberate way, "our ideals soon wear out when exposed to the friction of everyday life, are we not better without such unserviceable things altogether?"

"Bah!" exclaimed Madame, shrugging her graceful shoulders. "Our boots soon wear out, do they not, in the friction of everyday life, but is that any reason for going bare-foot all our days?"

"Certainly not, *ma chérie*; but it is a reason for preferring to be shod with solid leather shoes rather than with fairy glass-slippers."

"That is just like Philippe!" groaned his wife. "He is so afraid of being carried away by his feelings that he never really admires anything. I would not be as wise as he—no, not for a million francs. As for me, I love to idealise everything and everybody. I am always building altars to new and unknown idols; then Philippe passes by that way, and not one stone is left upon another."

"Then does Monsieur Grammont smash up your idols as well as his own? That is very rough on you, I think," said my father much amused.

"How really sweet of you to take my part like that, dear Sir Roger! You never saw a man with such a gift for idol-breaking as Philippe. He just proves to you, in his calm, wise, superior way, that you are wasting your worship on an utterly inadequate stick or stone; then you turn to your poor idol, and lo, it is all in little pieces. If ever my husband sets up an idol of his own, it will have to be made of india-rubber so that he can't break it; just as destructive children have india-rubber dolls, don't you know?"

"I have but one idol, and that is yourself, Madame," exclaimed Monsieur Grammont gallantly.

"Ah! I wonder if I am made of india-rubber," murmured his wife. "I think I must be, I am so elastic."

I learned a great deal from my talks with Madame Grammont. She would tell me all about her home in beautiful France, and how happy she was there in her girlhood: and she would also tell me stories of the old French nobility, though she could hardly ever bear to mention the Revolution. She seemed to have read and thought so much about that great historical catastrophe, that the iron which had decapitated her ancestors had, in spite of the lapse of nearly a century, entered into her own soul. She came of a very noble family, but Monsieur Grammont was of *bourgeois* origin; and with all her pretty manners to her husband, I don't think Madame ever quite forgot the social disparity between them.

One summer's day when Madame and I were strolling through the picture-gallery at Treherne Court, I told her the story of my favourite picture. It seemed to fascinate her as much as it did me, and for a time she gazed at it with rapt attention. Then she said: "Child, you do not tell the history aright. The old astrologer (by name Grammont) was an ancestor of my husband's, and I know the tale well."

"Oh! tell it to me, dear Madame," I cried with delight. "I have longed for years to hear more about the fate of my beautiful lady. It seems too horrible to think of her being tortured while she was still alive, and yet I want to know the truth as regards her fate."

"*Tortured!* she was never tortured. It is a base fabrication," cried Madame with animation. "Listen, and I will tell you the whole story. Ursule de Brie was the only daughter of a noble family, and her parents and her brothers perished on the guillotine. She in her turn was going to execution, when old Pierre Grammont (a citizen of some note, and a learned man though only *bourgeois*) begged for her life to assist him in one of his scientific experiments. But he did not want to torture her: he was never cruel—only cold and wise like all the Grammonts. He had a theory that when any one is cast into an artificial sleep, life is suspended, and that consequently such a person can exist without food and drink as long as the coma lasts; and can take up the thread of life again exactly where it was dropped, though in reality the interval may have been years and years in length. For a long time old Pierre had sought in vain for a subject on whom to try this experiment: but when human creatures were being killed like vermin, and blood was running like water in the streets of Paris, surely (he thought) one of these apparently worthless aristocrats might be delivered into his hands to do with as he thought fit.

So Ursule de Brie was snatched from the guillotine, and given to Pierre Grammont. He told her what he was going to do; but the poor girl was so utterly crushed and overwhelmed by the horrors of the preceding weeks that she did not care what became of her; and she at once consented to be thrown into an artificial sleep by means of the aged astrologer's passes and incantations. Grammont therefore made her as one dead, placed her in a leaden coffin, and buried her in a vault, which he had built in his garden.

Shortly after this the old man died; and in his will he commanded his heirs that fifty years after his death they should open the vault in the garden and should do as seemed good to them with the treasure they should find therein: but he added, that if they ventured to break open the vault before the fifty years had elapsed, they should thenceforward be haunted by his undying curse. Old Grammont had told no one about his experiment; but he had written the full details on parchment and buried the manuscript with Ursule de Brie.

"The Grammonts, though quite *bourgeois*, were a superstitious people, and had a great dread of incurring the old wizard's curse; so the vault in the garden was kept religiously shut up until the allotted half-century had passed. About thirty years from the present time a great-grandson of old Pierre's burst open the vault, and also the leaden coffin within. Imagine his surprise discovering therein a young girl fast asleep! On opening the roll of parchment which lay upon the sleeper's breast, he read the story which I have

just related to you; and also learned by what mesmeric means the unconscious victim was to be restored to life. Trembling with excitement, and hardly daring to hope that he would be successful, Monsieur Grammont performed the necessary passes; and was overpowered with mingled joy and amazement when the young girl awoke from her fifty years' slumber. It seemed to her that she had only been asleep for a few hours, and her heart was still sore for the loss of those kinsfolk who had been dead for half a century. Monsieur Grammont did his utmost to console the marvellous stranger, who seemed young enough to be his daughter, and yet was seventy years old when first he saw her face: and shortly afterwards he married Ursule de Brie."

"And was he kind to her, Madame?" I asked with intense interest.

"*Kind* to her, child? what a word to use with reference to the behaviour of a plebeian towards an aristocrat! He always regarded her with the profoundest respect and (I believe) admiration, and was never unconscious of the honour he had done himself by marrying into the *haute noblesse*."

"And was she happy with him?"

"Oh! happy enough, child, as women's happiness goes. But have you yet to learn, little one, that men can make this happiness exactly as they like, while women have to take what is ready-made? And ready-made clothes never fit as well as those that are made to order; they are sure to pinch somewhere."

"What relation was this Monsieur Grammont, the great-grandson of old Pierre, to your husband, Madame?" I asked.

"They are one and the same."

"And you"—I began in breathless excitement.

"I myself was once Ursule de Brie," answered Madame.

POETIC LICENSE.

ADAPTED FROM THE GERMAN.

IN the year 1636 the stage at the Hôtel de Bourgogne was particularly dazzling. At the present date theatrical accessories are more finished and perfect; but then, as now in Chinese theatres, the spectators themselves lent brilliancy to the boards. It was the custom for rows of seats to be placed on each side of the actors, and the fortunate occupiers of those chairs and benches were much envied by the general public who had, however, the privilege of beholding under the most favourable circumstances the lovely robes of the court ladies and the pompous toilettes of their cavaliers.

Corneille was at the height of his fame. The Queen-mother, Marie de Medicis, had advised him to study Spanish literature. He had done her bidding, and was about to produce his best work, "The Cid," as the result. Cardinal Richelieu, a play-writer and poetaster as well as a warrior, priest and statesman, envied him—an unenviable distinction, and one which put his head in danger, but the King was his friend and patron.

On the morning of the greatest day of the great dramatist's life another court wit and a friend of Louis XIII., the Marquis de Suze, was shown up three flights of stairs and ushered into Corneille's presence. It was in the Rue des deux Ecus. The poet had made his modest home here since leaving Rouen, his birth-place.

"My dearest sir," the Marquis exclaimed, "I rejoice at your approaching triumph."

"My hoped-for success," Corneille corrected modestly.

"There is no doubt—none whatever—I have read your play. Every word is a pearl."

"Ah, Marquis, your verdict is indeed encouraging! But will the public too praise every line?"

"There are a great many lines to praise," Suze said contemplatively.

"Do you think there are too many then?"

"Not I, but His Majesty the King is of another opinion, moved thereby perhaps by—well, you know how he and the Cardinal are determined to——"

Corneille's face blanched. "You mean to let me know I am to mutilate my offspring," he stammered.

"It is only a trifle, and in itself the King's request is a compliment. He knows, and hereby betrays his knowledge of the fact, that your poetry has immense influence over the minds of us all."

"The place—the place!" Corneille cried feverishly.

The Marquis produced a copy of "The Cid," and opened where a marker had been inserted. "It is here," he said, "in the second act, where Gormas refers to duelling, and says—

> "'Les satisfactions n'appaisent point une âme ;
> Qui les reçoit n'a rien, qui les fait se diffame ;
> Et de pareils accords l'effet le plus commun
> Est : de perdre d'honneur deux hommes au lieu d'un !'

"Well, my dear sir, if such sentiments as these are promulgated, by the favourite poet of France too, what chance can His Majesty have of success in his efforts at putting down these interminable duels? This is how I was bid put the matter before you."

"To cut out four lines! It is as though an enemy were to snatch from the King his strongest fortress," Corneille said sorrowfully.

The Marquis departed, however, with the assurance that the matter should be attended to, and as the day wore on towards the evening of the first performance the poet recovered his spirits, in spite of the mutilation of his play, and was of good courage and cheer when he beheld the theatre filled to overflowing with that public, so insignificant individually, collectively so mighty in applause or blame.

The stage was, as before stated, the most dazzling portion of the hall, and its sides were filled betimes with gay folk who made it resemble a flower garden bordered with ribbon beds, and awaiting the blossoming out of the central lilies and roses. The owners of reserved seats can afford to move leisurely, without crush, heat or hurry to their places: and consequently one cavalier, Count Rochefort, took his time, and arrived rather later than others on the raised dais. To his extreme surprise and wrath he found that his tabouret was already occupied by the Chevalier de Rieux in his most exquisite of costumes.

"Friend—monsieur," exclaimed the Count, "you have made a mistake. I yesterday secured this seat from Léonard the director."

"The mistake is yours," the other replied composedly, without budging an inch. "Léonard himself marked this special tabouret for me, and showed me where it was placed. I came early because I expected the house would be thronged—as it is."

"But I engaged the sixth tabouret in the second row, and this is it," the Count persisted wrathfully.

"You describe it correctly, but the place is mine."

"You will permit me to dispute that point."

"Come, Count, that is strong speaking. I give you my word!"

"Rieux, your word is all right, but anyone may make a mistake, and I say you have done so now."

"I have made no mistake. The seat is mine."

"Oh! you choose rather, say I, to usurp another man's place and to keep it!"

"You insult me, sir."

"I wish to do so," was the hasty reply.

Several persons had already become interested in the discussion.

Nearly everyone on the stage knew the two young courtiers. The offence given was a public one, and must be publicly wiped out. Rochefort must either apologise or Rieux must meet his insulter in single combat. There was no apology offered, and the duel was arranged for the next day, on the spot.

"And now, sir," Rieux said tranquilly, "be content. You can prove whether your dagger or sword is as sharp as your tongue: unless you turn recreant and, according to the new fashion, decline my challenge after due consideration."

"I decline your challenge! You insult me now, sir."

"Perhaps with intent to make all doubly sure," Rieux said; "and now permit me to vacate this seat. I will view the performance from the body of the house."

"I will do the same. So allow me to accompany you," Rochefort exclaimed.

This scene was soon forgotton, even by the actors in it, when the business of the evening began. The drama created extraordinary and almost unprecedented enthusiasm, especially amongst the younger men present.

When the multitude had thronged forth into the streets, analysing and discussing their enjoyment as they went, Corneille slipped through their midst a happy man, and returned to his humble room and home. Happy? yes, he was that; and as satisfied with applause as man could be; and yet he felt terribly lonely. He longed for someone with whom to share his triumph. He envied other men who had sweethearts and wives to rejoice with them. Love had not at that period crowned his life with the best of joys. He needed rest but could not quiet his nerves and mind. His whole soul cried out for some one—anyone—to exchange speech with about his successful play.

Meantime the two who had so recently struggled for the right of possession of a seat on the stage had been drifted beside each other in the crowd. They had forgotten each other's existence during the representation of the drama, to which they had attended with breathless interest. The many fair words and noble deeds their souls took part in had taken due effect in soothing their irritated nerves. Each now felt ashamed of their trivial dispute and unseemly quarrel, and wondered if it could indeed be worth while to die for sake of a wretched tabouret on the stage. Rochefort ventured a friendly remark on the poet's work, Rieux answered amicably. In a moment they were talking together as agreeably as though they had never disagreed. In the Rue Dauphiné, Rieux said haltingly, "I forgot, exactly, if I asked you to meet me very early to-morrow."

"If you think as I do now, you will not trouble to harass your memory any more about the trivial affair," Rochefort replied with a laugh.

"Then let it be forgotten," the chevalier said.

But an evil fate brought them in contact with a gentleman accompanied by two servants, just as they reached the street corner. "Ah, my dear friends," cried the Marquis de Suze, "you had wretched, places, both of you; but was it not a fine affair? I call it Corneille's masterpiece. He cannot surpass that. Neither can the Academy fault find there to much extent, even though it is not by one of their clan, nor the faultless five, I should say, particular as they are."

The Marquis here alluded to the authors Bois-Robert, Colletet l'Estoile and Rotrou, backed by the Cardinal, whose plays they were commissioned to put into form. The refusal of Corneille to undertake a share in this work drew on him the enmity, at this juncture, of the great Richelieu, who had his foibles like other "mighty men."

"Corneille is one of the five himself," quoth Rieux, "and would not be likely to acknowledge that his plays could be improved by cutting out."

"All the same, his poor 'Cid' had to undergo a little operation and mutilation this morning," was the reply. "But that was by order of His Majesty."

"What was cut out?" Rochefort inquired eagerly.

By ill-luck, as it proved on this occasion, Suze being one of the wits and talented men of the court, had cultivated his memory and a talent for recitation. He repeated the excised verse with great emphasis and effect, having no idea that the two young men had so recently been embroiled to a serious extent. The lines immediately stirred them up afresh. The good feeling just restored assumed the guise of poltroonery to each. Rochefort put his hand to his weapon, while Rieux cried aloud, "Corneille is right. The man who tries to so smooth over a quarrel is not one of honour, and he who——"

"You say truth," interrupted the other. "To-morrow. And where?"

"Pré-aux-Clercs."

"At what hour?"

"At seven in the morning."

"I will meet you there."

The Marquis de Suze remained as it were rooted to the ground. He looked after the two young gallants with dismay, as he realised what their words had signified. A mutual friend came up and further enlightened him on the affair. He cursed his own indiscretion: knowing he would fare ill with the King if the matter came to his ears in all its bearings. Of the duel itself he must hear. "It is too late now, at ten o'clock, to go to His Majesty with the story," he muttered ruefully; "but I will hurry to the Marquis de Verdes. He has a right to know the tale, and may possibly endeavour to put some spoke in their wheel, and at least delay the duel. Oh, these poets! if they have a good influence at times they can also do plenty of harm!"

Corneille was still excitedly pacing his dingy little room, and

longing for a companion of any sort, when he became aware that someone was knocking at his door, and not for the first time. "Come in," he said at last.

Then it was that he thought he saw a vision. A graceful lovely girl entered. She was elegantly attired, but her beautiful robe was partly concealed by a long brown cloak, from under the hood of which two beautiful distressed eyes glanced up at him entreatingly. She held a lantern in her hand.

"Madame!" he cried in astonishment, believing he spoke in a dream.

"You must pardon me," she said. "It is a dreadful thing, M. Corneille, for me to disturb you in your quiet home after such a busy anxious day as this must have been to you, and it is dreadful too for me to be out alone at such an hour; but, monsieur, I come to you on an affair of the utmost weight and importance. Your play was too beautiful, but——"

Corneille uttered an exclamation of relieved satisfaction. This charming lady had then been driven here by her emotion at his drama, but he was soon undeceived!

"It is a lovely play, Monsieur Corneille—quite lovely, but it has done, oh, so much harm!"

"I pray you take a seat, madame. My play has done harm, you say?"

With tears in her eyes and voice the young lady proceeded to tell the circumstances already related.

The poet listened with attention. He could not suppress a smile of gratified vanity. His poetry was indeed powerful, when those four lines had fire enough within their melody to re-awaken the dormant passions in these young men's breasts.

"It is horrible, is it not," the girl cried in conclusion, "that two noble fellows like these should perish: for however the thing ends this duel must virtually destroy them both: and all because of four lines of poetry—one verse—I don't even know what it is."

> "Les satisfactions n'appaisent point une âme;
> Qui les reçoit n'a rien, qui les fait se diffame:
> Et de pareils accords l'effet le plus commun
> Est: de perdre d'honneur deux hommes au lieu d'un!"

Corneille recited his verse with emphasis.

"Yes, that is it," the lady said. "And you call such lines beautiful, when they can do such hurt! Oh, sir, have pity on me! Your verse will be the destruction of my whole life's happiness. If Chevalier de Rieux is killed I can never be happy again, for I love him. If he kills M. de Rochefort he must fly, and I shall never see him again. The King and the Cardinal have now no pity on duellists. See, just see, how unhappy your lines make me!"

"But what can I do to mend matters?" the bewildered poet cried

"Why do you come to me, Mademoiselle de Verdes? For I see now it is you who have honoured me with this visit."

"You must stop this duel, for my sake. I came to you unknown to anyone. I said to myself that if a poet did the mischief, only a poet could undo it again. Sir, you will help me?"

Corneille once more began to pace up and down his small apartment. He was distracted with conflicting emotions, as well as still excited by the various events of the day.

"It would almost make a drama in itself, this story," he muttered. "It reminds one of Rodrigo and Ximene. It——"

His young guest made a movement of impatience and heaved a deep sigh.

"Oh! dear sir, do, for once, forget your poetry, and attend to this business at once," she implored in an indignant and tearful voice. "You have to save my life, also remember; because, if this duel takes place it will surely be the death of me too."

"Madame, be at ease, The way of escape is found. To a poet you should not decry his art."

"Found! Oh, what will you do?"

"That is my affair. What is the appointed place and hour for this affair?"

"To-morrow morning at seven o'clock at Pré-aux-Clercs, the usual rendezvous."

"Very well. I hope to hinder the combat. I will be there."

"And you will give me the earliest news of your success?"

"Yes, madame, but where?"

"You will find me in Rue Saint Thomas, in a sedan chair before the coiffeur there."

"You can reckon on seeing me. The thing is pretty certain: and now, madame, can I escort you home?"

"I have my servants below. Farewell, sir, with oh, so many blessings and thanks. My life and its happiness lie in your hands."

And covering her charming head and face again in the brown hood of her mantle, she departed. Corneille looked after her with a bitter smile which was yet sweet on his lips.

"She is not like my cruel sweetheart who threw me off and flung me into the arms of my beloved muse and mistress," he said: "but let the past be past. The world holds more faithful souls, it seems; and I have plenty to think of to-night without recalling youthful follies!"

He was out of doors betimes next morning, and at the Pré-aux-Clercs. He was not too soon, however, for he had not long to wait. The rendezvous was soon astir with moving figures who paid little heed to the fresh breeze and fair prospect. The Marquis de Suze was there. He made repeated efforts to expostulate with the younger men but to them it was as though he did not exist. Had he succeeded, Corneille would have kept out of the affair; but he now deemed it

time to interfere, and stepped between the combatants. All present recognised his identity with the utmost astonishment.

"What brings you here, M. Corneille?" inquired the Marquis.

"I have come to try to undo the mischief that an extraordinary error of yours has made, Marquis."

"I—an error of mine! What do you mean, monsieur?

"This duel would have been set aside, I hear, had not you unfortunately misquoted a verse of mine—a verse omitted from my drama, gentleman. It is right you should be made aware how the lines really run:—

> "'Les satisfactions valent mieux que le glaive,
> Qui les reçoit fait bien, qui les dit se relève.
> Et l'effet bienheureux de ces accords admis
> Est: au lieu d'un meurtre de faire deux amis.'"

Corneille uttered these lines and sentiments with such fine force and expression that they created an instantaneous and wonderful effect. The two young men hesitated—looked at each other shamefacedly, and finally each held out a friendly hand to the other. The duel was not to take place between them; but matters were more serious in another quarter. The Marquis advanced towards the poet.

"Monsieur Corneille, you lie!" he said coolly.

The insulted man at once put his hand to his sword and placed himself in fighting posture.

"Gentlemen," he exclaimed, turning to the young men. "You are witnesses to this insult. I refuse to submit tamely. This must indeed be fought out."

The Marquis hesitated, considered, and finally reached out his hand.

"I apologise humbly," he said. "Let the matter be put thus; I altered your verses yesterday, you altered mine to-day. Let each have his own share, and let us be friends. Truly we are all four well out of this meadow."

Corneille took the offered hand, whispering into his adversary's ear as he did so—

"In a good cause, I suppose, one might even be excused for making bad verses; but—bad verses and lack of courage put together is too much."

The Marquis laughed.

"I see, monsieur, that you can measure swords as well as verses."

They prepared to depart—Corneille hastened on before the others.

"I have a rendezvous," he explained. He went quickly to the appointed place, found the fair lady and gave her the much desired assurance that all was well.

A few hours later a letter from the Marquis de Verdes was delivered to the poet, requesting the pleasure of his company on that day to dinner.

Rieux and Rochefort were among the guests, and everything went

as smoothly as though no duel had ever been contemplated. The Marquis de Suze was also there. Another visitor during the course of the banquet, Baron Guerchville, inquired whether it were true that certain lines had been cut out of the drama just performed.

The poet bowed acquiescence. "I gave way to an urgent request, in a small matter," he said.

"Pray let us hear the excision," asked the Baron.

Corneille shook his head. "You must excuse me," he replied gravely. "Such omissions are best buried in oblivion until the aggrieved author brings out a complete edition of his works."

ALICE QUARRY.

MARRIAGE.

I DO not ask you, sweet, to tread
A path of roses by my side;
I twine no garlands for your head—
My heart's delight, my bride.

There are no rosy paths, my dear,
The thorns are thick in every way;
And every flower of every year
Lives only for a day.

Yet there's a garden very fair
Blooms on a far enchanted isle;
Heart of my heart! let us go there—
Stay there a little while.

Then comes the long life to live through,
The round of troubles, toils and tears.
How best can I, how best can you,
Live through the appointed years?

We must go through them hand in hand;
So only could we bear the way
That leads from the enchanted land
In which we could not stay.

E. NESBIT.

BERTIE MARTIN'S BLUES.

"WISH? of course I will."

The house-party was gathered round the celebrated wishing-well in the old ruins, forming one of the most attractive features of the estate of Newton Chase, and trying the luck that with some certainty had been froward of late.

The speaker was a bright fresh girl of nineteen, Dorothy Manners, who, with her brother Tom, a cadet from Sandhurst, was paying her first grown-up visit for the Denley Bachelors' Ball, and in the course of her stay had won the admiration of Captain Martin, known to his intimates as Bertie. And without betraying any of Dorothy's secrets we may allow that on the whole she thought him very nice. That Lady Newton (their hostess) saw this state of affairs with pleasure cannot be doubted; but whether the long invitation accorded to each was the result of intention or chance she did not divulge.

She had known Bertie Martin for several years, and he ranked as one of her favourites. The touch of cynicism that in unguarded moments he betrayed vexed while it puzzled her; and when on the death of a relative he was left with a comfortable little income, she, womanlike, felt it her duty if possible to remove the cloud of gloom that somehow of late had seemed habitual to him.

When, therefore, in the summer previous to the winter of which I am writing, she had during a visit to Devonshire renewed an old acquaintanceship in the form of the Reverend Robert Manners and his wife, and conceived a great affection for their lovely daughter—presented with so much pride by her parents—Lady Newton may be forgiven as the frank grey eyes were raised to hers and the merry laugh sounded in her ears, for feeling that if Dorothy could not assist in chasing away Bertie Martin's "blues," her knowledge of men was small.

And the man was, as men are, totally unconscious of the guidance of a "properly-conducted" woman; and when it became apparent, as it soon did, that the girl's truthful face and happy ways had made an impression, Lady Newton heaved a sigh of content, left things to take their course and waited quietly.

But suddenly, to her unaccountably, a change came over the spirit of her dream; and it came with the advent of Lady Evelyn Surtees two days previous to the ball.

It was extraordinary. Gossip had never in the slightest connected their names; she knew sufficient of her world to know it would if it could, and then—Lady Evelyn was not that sort of woman. True clever men told you she was clever; fools, that she was sweet and

gentle, with her lovely face and perfect ways; clever women said she was pretty, but "you know, dear, not a bit clever;" whilst silly ones declared they should like her, but they could not understand her. To her husband she was divine, and he spent most of his time in wondering how such a being could have condescended to him. She never quarrelled, at least openly, and some men worshipped her, but from afar.

However, whatever she might be, the fact remained that with her arrival had departed Dorothy's happiness. Captain Martin had become constrained and distant, and instead of engrossing her every moment, had left her to the society of his friend and brother-officer Captain Wemyss, contenting himself with the companionship of his own sex. What was the cause of it, wondered poor Lady Newton. Had they quarrelled? She thought not—she rather hoped they had.

But during this digression, we have left Dorothy sitting on the edge of the well, wishing, wishing, with all her heart. Everyone else has already done so in a really solemn manner, at the same time dropping a pebble into the clear depths. As the girl followed in her turn, she happened to glance at Captain Martin, who was watching her fixedly, as if to read her thoughts.

Her manner changed.

"I wonder," she asked, "if these wishes have ever come true?"

"Oh! some do, of course," replied Captain Wemyss, "in fact I know a queer case in point, but I won't answer for the fulfilled wish bringing happiness. A fellow in our battalion was awfully fond of a girl, a Miss Saunderson—you remember her, Martin?" Bertie nodded, and he resumed: "The liking was mutual, she was quite a child; only sixteen, I fancy, and I knew her intimately. One day at a picnic we were all wishing, much the same as to-day, and afterwards she came to me and said, 'I shall be such a happy girl if my wish come true.' I laughed and said, 'Be sure to tell me if it does,' and she promised to do so. I was sent to the plains for a month the next day, and on my return I met her with all the smiles gone from her pretty little face. Poor soul, she sobbed out her grief to me; her father would not hear of an engagement, as he thought the man 'rather fast.' 'My wish did come true,' she said, 'for I hoped he would propose, and he did that afternoon; but what was the good of it?' He was killed shortly afterwards in Afghanistan, and she was awfully cut up for a long time; but at last married a man of the name of Trevor. They live in London, and she and I have always been the best of friends."

"Are you not speaking of the Mrs. Trevor who is expected this afternoon?" inquired Lady Evelyn.

"Yes," he replied, "and you know the proverb, 'Speak of an angel,' etc.; here she comes with Lady Newton."

The party turned to greet her, for she was a general favourite, and Captain Martin advanced with outstretched hand:

"I suppose you hardly remember me, Mrs. Trevor? it is several years since we met."

"I think I do," she replied, smiling pleasantly; "are you not 'little Bertie Martin' that used to be? You had just joined when I first met you, and were devoted to polo; are you as fond of it still?" and the talk drifted to other subjects until there was a proposal to explore the ruins, as a secret room had lately been discovered and Lady Newton was anxious to show it to the new arrival.

Most of the party had already disappeared, but Lady Evelyn remained seated. As Bertie was following, a voice stopped him, and he turned.

"Did you call, Lady Evelyn?"

"Yes, I did," she replied, "and of all the rude men I have ever known, you are the rudest. Don't you see that I don't want to explore, but that I want to be amused? Please leave the ruins alone, and stay and chat with me."

"Most certainly," answered Bertie; "but I feel my powers in that direction are small, unless unwittingly I am lucky enough to afford you amusement, as I sometimes appear to do."

She took no notice of this remark, but looked at him steadily; surely no man could be quite insensible to the pretty picture she was making, in her soft grey gown, with her fair hair and white skin against the winter landscape.

"I don't think India can be a very nice place, Bertie," she said at length, "for you have not improved since you went out. What a nice boy you used to be, too, so genuine, so pleasant, and now nothing but bitterness."

Bertie bit his lips. "I don't think we will refer to the past," said he, "although forgotten and unregretted things leave their track; and I suppose when once a man has had his faith in womankind destroyed, it is hard to revive it."

"Faith in womankind destroyed!" she replied, laughing lightly "why you are getting quite heroic! don't be so; it is quite out of date." Then after a pause: "My dear Bertie, why will men never appreciate the little kindnesses we do them? There is nothing so beneficial as for a man to fall in love early and with a sensible woman. I don't wish to imply anything," laughing again, "but where would you be now, if I had been a flirt, or equally allowed you to make love to me—to say nothing of what I owe to my old Jack! Think of the blasting of your fortunes, of your parents' dismay, had you fallen across some penniless pretty girl—for you with your romantic disposition would have gone down at once. Pray pardon the way I put it, but, mildly, you are a donkey, and don't know when you are well off!"

"You will pardon the way I put it also, Lady Evelyn," rejoined he "but there is a refinement in flirtation that is more cruel and subtle than anything you can call by its name. It takes all you have to

give, it saps your being, and then leaves you as the world would say, with no reason to complain; but the more you value truth and refinement in woman, the more do you suffer by it."

"I really cannot follow you," murmured his companion, stifling a yawn, "you go so very deep, and I told you I want to be amused. You are none the worse for the deadly injury I wrought you," raising her eyebrows slightly, "so come down from the high horse, and be companionable. Do," she added coaxingly, and with the rare gift of which she had so large a portion, drew the conversation back to pleasing topics, and chatted merrily until they returned home.

Meanwhile, Dorothy escaping unseen had made her way to her own little room, and there Tom, after vainly searching the garden for her, had found her an hour or two later.

"May I come in, Dolly?" he asked gently, as he opened the door and cautiously peered into the room.

"Yes, dear," she replied, "come and sit down and talk to me."

Dolly was lying on the sofa in the firelight, which shining on it now and then, revealed a tumbled head of brown fluffy hair, a sweet child's face, and eyes that for some reason, perhaps a headache, did not sparkle with their wonted lustre.

The room was half in shade, so Tom, after stumbling over many pieces of furniture, made for the fireplace and stood in front of it.

"I didn't know you were seedy when we went to the well this afternoon," he commenced. "Lady Evelyn has promised to tell me if her wish comes true. And oh, Dolly," with a burst of enthusiasm, "what a rattling fine woman she is! She has given me three dances for this evening, and shan't I feel proud—I shall scarcely know if I am walking on solid ground; won't the other fellows envy me, that's all!"

"Yes, she is very pretty," said the girl wearily.

"Pretty?" cried Tom; "lovely, you mean." Then with a little unconscious superiority: "I think she's a man's woman; and of course (with ire) you can't expect women to admire them."

"No," said Dolly in an amused tone; "I suppose not."

The boy sat silent for a few moments, but only for a few, when he rattled on. "By-the-bye, have you quarrelled with him?"

"Quarrelled with whom?" returned the girl sharply.

"Martin," said Tom. "You used to be always together, and for the last day or two you have scarcely spoken to him."

At this moment the fire-light flickered over Dollie's face, showing an expression of such suffering upon it that the boy was startled.

"Are you in such pain, Dolly?" he inquired.

"Terrible," she murmured; but the next moment was sorry she had spoken, for Tom had marched to her dressing-table, again stumbling over half the furniture; she heard him strike a match, and in a few moments he was back at her side with a tumbler filled with *eau de*

Cologne and water in one hand, and two or three handkerchiefs in the other. He perched himself on the arm of the sofa, and commenced laying the wet rags upon her forehead. He was moving one preparatory to supplying its place, when something struck him, and he peered suspiciously into her face.

"Dolly," he whispered gently, "is anything the matter, dear? What have you been crying about?"

"I crying?" with a forced laugh; "don't talk such nonsense; I have such a headache, so cover my eyes up quickly like a kind boy. It's done it a great deal of good," she added gratefully.

So Tom said no more, but shook his head, and perhaps more gently than before changed the cloths and fanned her until the dressing gong sounded. Then with protestations that the headache was completely gone, she dismissed him to dress, telling him he would never be ready in time.

At this moment Lady Evelyn's words: "You are none the worse for the injury," with their mocking sound, were ringing in Bertie Martin's ears as he ascended the stairs to his room. Was he indeed none the worse? When eight years previously he had met Lady Evelyn, and in the full enthusiasm of youth, infatuated with her beauty had poured at her feet his fresh full homage, giving all, but asking nothing (the boy's worship that is so soon got over!), he was met not with the quiet repression that would have put her in the right for always, and raised her above all women, but the quiet amusement the light laugh, the "shocking, shocking!" that had stung him to the quick, and sent him from her presence man instead of boy. From henceforth he was a woman's enemy, albeit his gentle and courteous manner to their sex.

When three weeks ago he met Dorothy Manners for the first time almost from the first day his heart had gone out to her in her simplicity and sweetness. She had well-nigh restored the trust that had been so crushed and broken, that is so essential to the character of the strong man. He had decided to put his fate to the touch at that evening's ball, as his visit was ended the next morning, when he was leaving Newton Chase. But the appearance on the scene of Lady Evelyn two days prior to that event had changed everything. The very sight of her had re-opened the old wound of distrust and unbelief, and with no consideration for Dolly or her feelings, he had purposely avoided her, determining to keep many miles between them in future.

Perhaps had he known that with all her brave appearance the curly head was pressed tight into the pillow in the solitude of the night, and a storm of sobs shook the wee frame as she asked herself again and again what had she done? how had she offended? he would not have judged all women from the same standpoint.

The gong sounding in the midst of his reflections awoke him to the knowledge that his dressing was in a backward state. There was

nothing for it but to complete his toilette as quickly as possible, and descend to the drawing-room, with many apologies for his late appearance.

"Don't mention it, my dear fellow," said his host patting his shoulder, "we have all had to be so careful this evening; you are nothing to Tom, who has posed before his glass for two hours at least, and has to finish afterwards. And Tom, who was attired in a very high collar, smiled as cheerfully as that instrument would allow him to do.

Dorothy was looking her very prettiest, her cheeks flushed with colour, and she was laughing and talking as merrily as if her course of love were running very smooth. At all events she would not wear the willow for anyone. But oh dear! how she had looked forward to this ball, scratching off the days in her calendar as they went by; and now—well, she would enjoy it all the same.

When they came down cloaked for the carriages, they occupied the spare time in filling up the programmes. Bertie found it impossible to keep his eyes steadily from one point of the room; he was obliged by common courtesy to dance with the guests in the house, so he made his way to Dorothy's side, who was laughing over some joke with Captain Wemyss (and now that he thought of it, that gentleman had been slightly stiff in manner all day), to ask for a dance.

"Certainly," the girl replied in a friendly tone; "will you have a square or round?"

Now why men should consider it an insult to be offered a square is to me a mystery, but the fact remains that they do; so Bertie's chin went a few inches higher in the air, as he replied:

"Round, if you have no objection, and may I have two?"

"Be careful of your dances, Dolly, please," said Lady Newton, who was passing at the moment; "I am answerable for a good many with you this evening."

That lady had a wise head on a pair of small shoulders, and did not approve in the very least of the way in which her pretty favourite was being treated, and she felt certain that with a little help the girl could hold her own.

It was pointing to half-past ten, when the party entered the ball-room, and were soon enjoying themselves as much as a perfect floor, brilliant music and pleasant partners can make them.

Bertie's first dance with Dolly was over. She had been very entertaining, chatting merrily over the assembled company, as if he were only an evening's acquaintance, seeming oblivious of anything that might have been. He was decidedly piqued, and determined to leave early the next day, so his replies to her sallies were stiff and laconic.

As a fresh dance struck up, he remembered that he was engaged for it to Mrs. Trevor, and he was glad of it, for just then he could talk better of years ago in India than of the present time.

"Will you sit it out?" he asked, as he claimed her, "the room has become so warm."

"Certainly," she acquiesced, "and I am a little tired too."

So he found her a nice nook where he settled her comfortably and then sank into a seat by her side.

"I was so pleased to see you this evening," she said, "I had no idea I was to meet you; you little know what a treat it is to me to meet people I knew as a girl; for I am literally without any relatives as my dear old father died shortly after my marriage. You must come and see us on your return to town. I have three babies, so you will have to make their acquaintance."

They talked of many things and many people, until at last Bertie touched on the name of her lover of years gone by:

"You remember him?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered softly, "we saw by the papers that he fell at the storming of Candahar; you were his great friend, I remember that."

"I was with him at the end," he said; hesitated, and then continued "His last words were a message, which I promised to deliver should I ever have the chance; and now after years the opportunity has come."

"Hush!" she murmured, as she raised her face and he saw her eyes were misty; "do not tell me; I do not wish to hear it."

"But, but, Mrs. Trevor," stammered Bertie, amazed, "he is dead he died six years ago; it cannot matter now."

"No, no, of course not, I know that," she said, and as she laid her hand upon his arm a little sob ran through her laugh, as she continued: "You know I have old-fashioned notions; my friends tell me it is one of my worst faults, but you must forgive it. My husband is very dear to me, so—so—I cannot let him have a rival, even in the thought of one so long passed away. But come, Captain Martin," with a change of tone, "you will be thinking me quite sentimental and I don't wish to get into the black books of your other partners," laughing. "If I am not mistaken I hear the opening bars of a waltz."

Without a word he led her to the ball-room, and with a very gentle smile and a look she never forgot, he left her.

With Dolly was his next dance, with Dolly were all his thoughts and he felt as if he were walking on air. The long-remembered distrust was dead for ever; killed more powerfully by the old-fashioned words of the woman he had just quitted than by any means that ever Dolly could have devised.

And she? The night was fast wearing away, the night that had no no background, and her heart felt sick with pain as she saw him cross the room to her side. She was brave, but still she could not summon a smile as she dismissed her partner; so gently, without a word, took his arm for her last dance.

"You do not want to dance this; will you come out?" Bertie asked. But as she raised her eyes to his, and hesitated, he said quite humbly: "I want to ask you something, Dolly dear; do come."

HOW HE LEFT THE HOTEL.

I USED to work the passenger-lift in the Empire Hotel, that big block of building in lines of red and white brick like streaky bacon, that stands at the corner of —— Street. I'd served my time in the army, and got my discharge with good-conduct stripes; and how I got the job was in this way. The hotel was a big company affair with a managing committee of retired officers and such-like; gentlemen with a bit o' money in the concern, and nothing to do but fidget about it, and my late Colonel was one of 'em. He was as good-tempered a man as ever stepped when his will wasn't crossed, and when I asked him for a job, "Mole," says he, "you're the very man to work the lift at our big hotel. Soldiers are civil and business-like, and the public like 'em only second best to sailors. We've had to give our last man the sack, and you can take his place."

I liked my work well enough and my pay, and kept my place a year, and I should have been there still if it hadn't been for a circumstance—— But don't let me anticipate. Ours was a hydraulic lift. None o' them rickety things swung up like a poll parrot's cage in a well staircase that I shouldn't care to trust my neck in. It ran as smooth as oil, a child might have worked it, and safe as standing on the ground. Instead of being stuck full of advertise-ments like an omnibus, we'd mirrors in it, and the ladies would look at themselves, and pat their hair, and set their mouths when I was taking 'em downstairs dressed of an evening. It was a little sitting-room, with red velvet cushions to sit down on, and you'd nothing to do but get into it, and it 'ud float you up or float you down light as a bird.

All the visitors used the lift one time or another, going up or coming down. Some of them was French, and they called the lift the "*assenser*," and good enough for them in their language, no doubt; but why the Americans, that can speak English when they choose, and are always finding out ways of doing things quicker than other folks, should waste time and breath calling a lift an elevator, I don't make out.

I was in charge of the lift from noon till midnight. By that time the theatre and dining-out folks had come in, and anyone returning late walked upstairs, for my day's work was done. One of the porters worked the lift till I come on duty in the morning; but before twelve there was nothing particular going on, and not much till after two o'clock. Then it was pretty hot work with visitors going up and down constant, and the electric bell ringing you from one floor to another like a house on fire. Then came a quiet spell while

dinner was on, and I'd sit down comfortable in the lift and read my paper, only I mightn't smoke. But nobody else might neither, and I had to ask furren gentlemen to please not smoke in it, it was against the rule. I hadn't so often to tell English gentlemen, they're not like furreners that seem as if their cigars was glued to their lips.

I always noticed faces as folks got into the lift, for I've sharp sight and a good memory, and none of the visitors needed to tell me twice where to take them. I knew them and I knew their floor as well as they did themselves.

It was in November that Colonel Saxby came to the Empire Hotel. I noticed him particularly, because you could see at once that he was a soldier. He was a tall, thin man about fifty, with a hawk nose, keen eyes, and a grey moustache, and walked stiff from a gun-shot wound in the knee. But what I noticed most was the scar of a sabre-cut across the right side of the face. As he got into the lift to go to his room on the fourth floor, I thought what a difference there is among officers. Colonel Saxby put me in mind of a telegraph-post for height and thinness; and my old Colonel was like a barrel in uniform, but a brave soldier and a gentleman all the same. Colonel Saxby's room was number 210, just opposite the glass door leading to the lift, and every time I stopped on the fourth floor number 210 stared me in the face. The Colonel used to go up in the lift every day regular, though he never came down in it till—— But I'm coming to that presently. Sometimes, when he was alone in the lift, he'd speak to me. He asked me in what regiment I'd served, and said he knew the officers in it. But I can't say he was comfortable to talk to. There was something stand-off about him, and he always seemed deep in his own thoughts. He never sat down in the lift. Whether it was empty or full he stood bolt upright under the lamp, where the light fell on his pale face and scarred cheek.

One day in February I didn't take the Colonel up in the lift, and as he was regular as clockwork I noticed it, but I supposed he'd gone away for a few days, and I thought no more about it. Whenever I stopped on the fourth floor the door of 210 was shut, and as he often left it open, I made sure the Colonel was away. At the end of a week I heard a chambermaid say that Colonel Saxby was ill; so, thinks I, that's why he hasn't been in the lift lately.

It was a Tuesday night, and I'd had an uncommonly busy time of it. It was one stream of traffic up and down, and so it went on the whole evening. It was on the strike of midnight, and I was about to put out the light in the lift, lock the door, and leave the key in the office for the man in the morning, when the electric bell rang out sharp; I looked at the dial, and saw I was wanted on the fourth floor. It struck twelve as I stepped into the lift. As I passed the second and third floors, I wondered who it was that had rung so late, and thought it must be a stranger that didn't know the rule of the house. But when I stopped at the fourth floor and flung open the

door of the lift, Colonel Saxby was standing there wrapped in a military cloak. The door of his room was shut behind him, for I read the number on it. I thought he was ill in his bed, and ill enough he looked, but he had his hat on, and what could a man that had been in bed ten days want with going out on a winter midnight? I don't think he saw me, but when I'd set the lift in motion, I looked at him standing under the lamp, with the shadow of his hat hiding his eyes, and the light full on the lower part of his face, that was deadly pale, the scar on his cheek showing still paler.

"Glad to see you're better, sir," said I; but he said nothing, and I didn't like to look at him again. He stood like a statue with his cloak about him, and I was downright glad when I opened the door of the lift for him to step out in the hall. I saluted as he got out, and he went past me towards the front door.

"The Colonel wants to go out," I said to the porter who stood staring, and he opened the door and Colonel Saxby walked out into the snow.

"That's a queer go!" he said.

"It is," said I. "I don't like the Colonel's looks, he doesn't seem himself at all. He's ill enough to be in his bed, and there he is gone out on a night like this."

"Anyhow he's got a famous cloak to keep him warm. I say, supposing he's gone to a fancy ball, and got that cloak on to hide his dress," said the porter, laughing uneasily, for we both felt queerer than we cared to say, and as we spoke there came a loud ring at the door-bell.

"No more passengers for me!" I said; and I was really putting the light out this time, when Joe opened the door, and two gentlemen entered that I knew at a glance were doctors. One was tall, and the other was short and stout, and they both came to the lift.

"Sorry, gentlemen, but it's against the rule for the lift to go up after midnight."

"Nonsense!" said the stout gentleman; "it's only just past twelve, and a matter of life and death. Take us up at once to the fourth floor," and they were in the lift like a shot; so up we went, and when I opened the door, they walked straight to number 210. A nurse came out to meet them, and the stout doctor said: "No change for the worse, I hope?"

And I heard her reply: "The patient died five minutes ago, sir."

Though I'd no business to speak, that was more than I could stand. I followed the doctors to the door and said: "There's some mistake here, gentlemen, I took the Colonel down in the lift since the clock struck twelve, and he went out."

The stout doctor said sharply: "A case of mistaken identity. It was someone else you took for the Colonel."

"Begging your pardon, gentlemen, it was the Colonel himself, and the night porter that opened the front door for him knew him as well

as me. He was dressed for a night like this, with his military cloak wrapped round him."

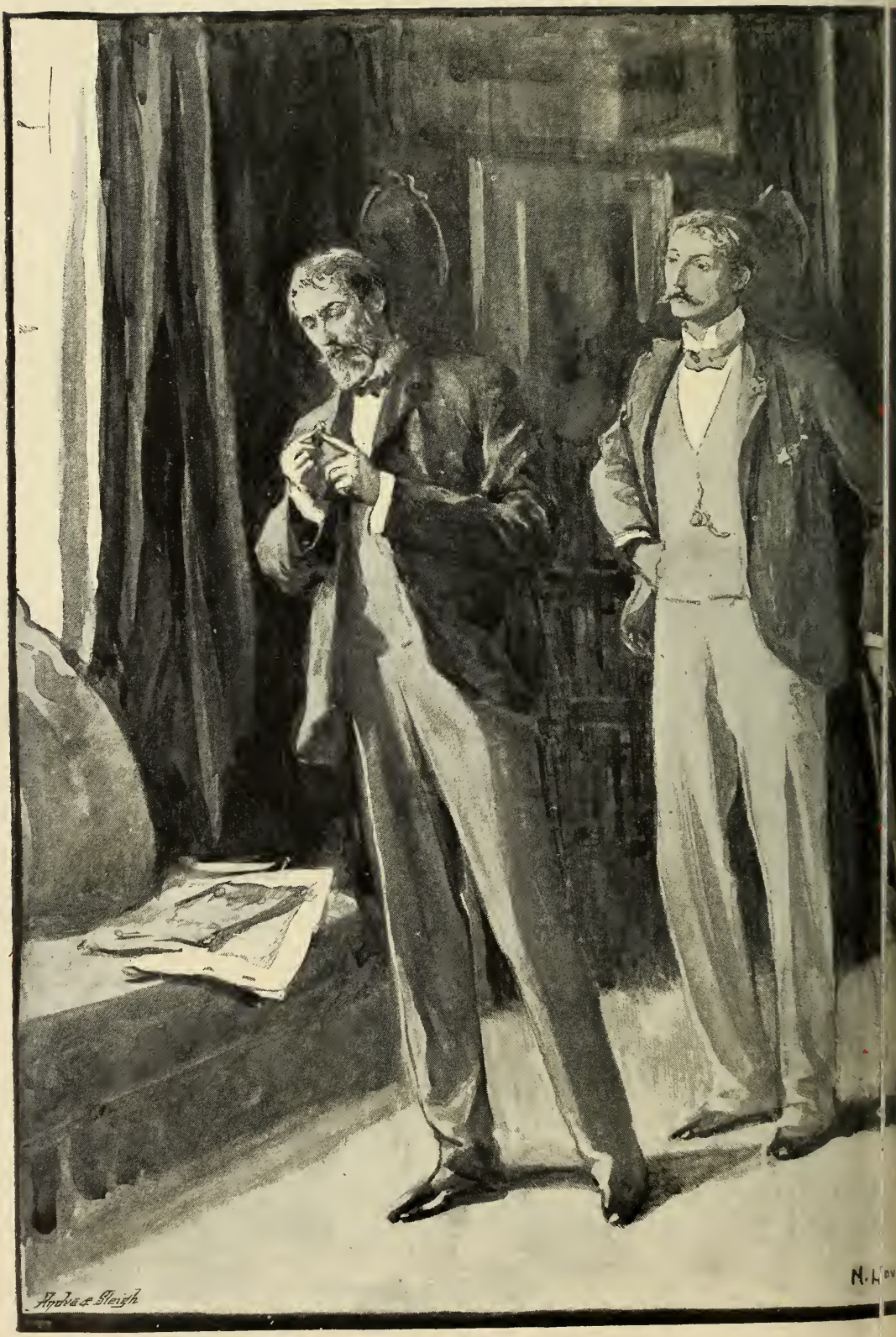
"Step in and see for yourself," said the nurse.

I followed the doctor into the room, and there lay Colonel Saxby looking just as I had seen him a few minutes before. There he lay, dead as his forefathers, and the great cloak spread over the bed to keep him warm that would feel heat and cold no more. I never slept that night. I sat up with Joe, expecting every minute to hear the Colonel ring the front door bell. Next day, every time the bell for the lift rang sharp and sudden, the sweat broke out on me and I shook again. I felt as bad as I did the first time I was in action. Me and Joe told the manager all about it, and he said we'd been dreaming; but, said he, "Mind you don't talk about it, or the house'll be empty in a week."

The Colonel's coffin was smuggled into the house the next night. Me and the manager and the undertaker's men took it up in the lift, and it lay right across it, and not an inch to spare. They carried it into number 210, and while I waited for them to come out again, a queer feeling came over me. Then the door opened softly, and four men carried out the long coffin straight across the passage, and set it down with its foot towards the door of the lift, and the manager looked round for me.

"I can't do it, sir," I said. "I can't take the Colonel down *again*. I took him down at midnight yesterday, and that was enough for me."

"Push it in," said the manager, speaking short and sharp, and they ran the coffin into the lift without a sound. The manager got in last, and before he closed the door he said, "Mole, you've worked this lift for the last time, it strikes me." And I had, for I wouldn't have stayed on at the Empire Hotel after what had happened, not if they'd doubled my wages; and me and the night porter left together.



JOHN TOOK THE RING AND LOOKED AT IT FOR A MOMENT OR TWO, AS ONE IN DOUBT.

THE ARGOSY.

NOVEMBER, 1894.

THE GREY MONK.

By T. W. Speight, Author of "The Mysteries of Heron Dyke."

CHAPTER XLIV.

BACK AT ST. OSWYTH'S

OUR lovers took a tender farewell of each other.

No other course had been open to Sir Gilbert than to assume that, after leaving the Chase, his son would book himself by an early steamer back to America. Should such prove to be the case, Lisle would be only a few days behind him. Everard calculated that if he were fortunate enough to light on "Mr. John Alexander" immediately after his arrival at Pineapple City, he might count upon being back at the Chase in a day or two under three weeks. He would write to Ethel as soon as he landed at New York, and again on reaching Pineapple City, but he would have to console himself as best he could without any news of, or from, her between the date of his departure and that of his return.

He left Mapleford at an early hour next morning, which was that of Friday. He had already settled in his mind to sail by the *Arbaces*, which was timed to leave Liverpool at noon on Saturday. Thus he had the whole intervening day to himself, and he determined to devote it to a purpose about which he said no word to anyone at the Chase—not even to Ethel.

He had been greatly struck with the story told him by Ethel that afternoon as they wandered together by the margin of the haunted pool, and since then he had thought about it much and often. It was a mystery the solution of which, as it seemed to him, would have to be sought for in the United States. It was from there Ethel had been brought as an infant, and it could scarcely be doubted that she had been born there. Now that he was bound for America on

another matter, he had made up his mind, before sailing, to run down to St. Oswyth's, interview the Miss Thursbys, and satisfy himself as to whether there was, or was not, a possibility of eliciting from them sufficient information to enable him to build up a case worth investigating whilst he was in the States.

Ethel had not failed to tell her aunts in her letters about her meeting with Everard Lisle, nor of her surprise at finding that he was in the service of Sir Gilbert Clare, who was none other than first cousin to Lady Pell, and thereafter his name found a mention in nearly all her letters. The sisters were glad that it should be so, and told themselves that it must be pleasant for Ethel to be associated with someone who came from St. Oswyth's, and that the two doubtless found many subjects in common to talk about. Not a suspicion of what was presently to happen ever found lodgment in their minds until Ethel informed them of her actual engagement, subject to their approval. It was a letter full of love and dutiful affection to the aunts, though every word proved that for all time she had given away her heart to Everard Lisle.

The important epistle was delivered at Rose Mount just as the sisters had finished breakfast, and was brought in by Tamsin when she came to clear the table. "From Miss Ethel," said the old woman as she laid it down in front of Miss Matilda, whose turn to enact the part of elder sister it happened to be. Ethel's letters always arrived about breakfast-time and were read aloud by one or other of the sisters, and, somehow, Tamsin generally contrived to be present at the reading—a privilege tacitly accorded her by her mistresses.

Miss Matilda, with characteristic precision, proceeded to slit open the envelope with the tiny pair of scissors which she always carried in a case in her pocket. Tamsin, with dilatory fingers, was removing the breakfast things one by one on to the tray which she had brought in with her.

Miss Matilda read the first few lines aloud, and then paused in a tremor of agitation. A low cry escaped from Miss Jane.

The sisters gazed at each other across the table, the same expression of consternation and distress on the faces of both. "Engaged to Everard Lisle! Oh! who would have thought it?" they exclaimed at the same moment, for not only their thoughts on any given subject, but very often the words by which they gave expression to them, were identical. Then for a minute or more both seemed unable to find another word to say.

"I should have thought," said Miss Matilda at length in her most dignified tone, in which there was yet an unwonted quaver, as she gave a tug at the little knitted shawl which she always wore at breakfast time: "I should have thought that, after the wretched experience Ethel went through so recently, she would have shunned the other sex most assiduously, if not for ever, in any case for a very long time to come."

Miss Matilda took up the letter again and read aloud to the end. Tamsin had transferred the breakfast things to her tray, and had deposited the latter on the side-board; she now proceeded to draw the cloth off the table and to slowly fold it. Not a word escaped her.

"I am afraid, sister, that we can but bow to the inevitable," said Miss Matilda with a sigh as she folded the letter. "It seems to me that we have no right, even if we had the will, to withhold our approval of the step she has chosen to take."

"My own view exactly," replied Miss Jane with a sorrowful shake of the head. "And yet—oh, dear!—we shall only have the dear girl back at home to lose her permanently after a little while. And I was looking forward—— Oh! I was looking forward to so many things."

And then before more could be said Tamsin's voice broke suddenly in. "And is it not a right and proper thing that Miss Ethel should marry and have a home of her own?" demanded the old woman in tones which had something of an injured ring in them. "Why should she not have a husband to love and cherish her—some good man to whose life she—in her turn—will be a blessing? Ay, and he is a good man, is Mr. Everard Lisle—very different from that other one! If some of us have missed it, is there any reason why we should begrudge it to her? I trow not, indeed—I trow not!"

She and her tray were gone before Miss Matilda had sufficiently recovered from her astonishment to find a word to say.

"Really, the way Tamsin presumes on our good nature and her own length of service is at times most trying. I am afraid that one of these days we shall be under the necessity of giving her notice." It was not the first time Miss Matilda had spoken to the same effect; but no one knew better than she how empty was the threat.

"It seems to me, sister," remarked Miss Jane timidly, "that we have been justly rebuked for our selfishness. We have been thinking more of our own loss than of the dear girl's happiness. That is not as it should be."

Miss Matilda did not answer for a little while. She seemed intent on tearing up the envelope of Ethel's letter into the tiniest of fragments. Then she said gently: "You are right, sister. It *is* the child's happiness that we ought to consider first of all. But"—with a sigh—"we are growing old, and the house will seem very lonely without her."

Then, somehow, tears sprang to the eyes of both, and for a little space they wept silently.

But there were no traces of tears in their eyes when, about four o'clock the same afternoon, just as they had agreed between themselves that if Ethel must marry, there was no one to whom they would sooner entrust her than to Everard Lisle, they were startled by seeing Lisle himself marching up the garden-path and making direct for the front door.

Nor were the sisters less surprised when he informed them of the special purpose which had brought him there. They willingly entered into all the details of the story which Ethel had told him, going over it with him step by step; but in the result he found that he had been unable to add anything of real consequence to that which he knew already.

One thing, however, they were in a position to give him, although he had his doubts as to its value, seeing that it bore date nineteen years back, and that was the address of Kirby Griggs, the lawyer's clerk, who had recognised the portrait of the self-styled Mrs. Montmorenci-Vane as that of his unmarried sister, Martha Griggs. Miss Matilda had found the address after her brother's death in his private memorandum book.

When, after Everard was gone, Tamsin took in the supper tray, she had to set her mouth hard in order to suppress the smile which would otherwise have puckered it. In place of the morning's agitations and tears, the sisters were now complacently discussing the important question of what material Ethel's wedding-dress should be made! "And now to come to the pecuniary part of the affair," said Miss Matilda. "I should not like our dear girl to go to her husband quite empty-handed."

"Certainly not, sister. The same thought has been in my own mind. I do not suppose that Mr. Lisle's position is a specially lucrative one."

"For my part, I should be quite willing to settle on Ethel my half-share of the rental of Vale View House, which, now that Mrs. Loftus has taken it on a seven years' lease, will be a sure source of income for that length of time."

"It would make me very happy to do the same with my half-share. Now that we have grown used to our humbler style of living, we really don't need the rent money. And in future there will be only our two selves, you know, sister."

"No, only our two selves," echoed Miss Matilda, sadly.

That night, when Tamsin went upstairs to her own room, she took out of a drawer her savings bank book and refreshed her memory as to the sum which stood there to her credit, and represented the savings of many laborious years. That sum she made up her mind should be very considerably depleted before she was much older. To what better use could she put the money than in buying a wedding-present for the child who had been, and would ever be, as dear to her rugged, but tender old heart as she could possibly be to the heart of Miss Matilda or Miss Jane!

CHAPTER XLV.

"COME BACK TO ME."

EVERARD left St. Oswyth's by the six o'clock train on Saturday morning. Four hours later he was in Liverpool. Taking a cab for himself and his portmanteau, he proceeded direct to the shipping office and there booked a berth on board the *Arbaces* for New York. Thence he was driven to the landing-stage, where he found the tender whose duty it was to transfer the passengers and their luggage on board the huge liner anchored out in mid-stream.

On reaching the *Arbaces* Lisle at once made his way to the state-room which had been allotted him. He knew already that he would have to share it with a fellow-passenger, and when, on entering it, he found there a dressing-case and a small portmanteau, a natural curiosity to ascertain the name of the person who, for the next week or more would be his nightly, if not his daily companion, led him to turn up one of the labels and read what was written thereon. Rarely, perhaps never, in his life had Everard Lisle been more amazed than he was when his eyes took in these words: "John Alexander, Esq. Passenger to New York." By one of those singular coincidences, which are far more common than the generality of people imagine them to be, he and the man of whom he was in pursuit, and on whom he had not expected to set eyes till after a journey of close upon four thousand miles, had crossed each other's path at the outset. Yet, but for the chance of his having read the address label when he did, they would probably have been shipmates for some time before discovering the relation in which each stood to the other, and, in any case, as the *Arbaces* did not call at Queenstown, they would have been compelled in their own despite to make the voyage out and home again.

Lisle had not recovered from his astonishment when the cabin door was opened from without and he saw before him a tall, finely-built man of middle age, with high aquiline features, dark, grave, earnest-looking eyes, a somewhat worn and thoughtful-looking face, and a long flowing beard already flecked with white.

"My cabin chum, I presume," said the stranger in a deep mellow voice, and with an exceedingly pleasant smile. "I hope we shall have a good passage, and that at the end of it our companionship will remain a pleasant recollection in connection with it."

Everard smiled and bowed. "I have taken the liberty of reading the name on your luggage," he said. "Pray excuse the question. I have a special reason for asking it, but are you Mr. John Alexander of Pineapple City in the State of Michigan?"

The other lifted his eyebrows in surprise. "That is certainly my address, and therefore I can only assume that I am the person to whom you refer."

"Then you must be the person whom I was going all the way to Pineapple City in search of. I am especially glad that I have met you now and here—for one thing, because my having done so will save me the necessity of a voyage to the States and back. Mr. Alexander, I am the bearer of a letter addressed to you from Sir Gilbert Clare of Withington Chase."

For a moment or two it seemed to Mr. Alexander as if the cabin floor were rising and sinking, as it might have done in a heavy gale. He seated himself on the edge of his berth; his face had faded to an ashen grey.

"A letter from my—from Sir Gilbert Clare for me!" he said, speaking like a man in a dream.

From the case which he carried in his breast pocket, Everard extracted Sir Gilbert's missive and handed it to the other. "I will see you again in the course of a few minutes," he said.

It will be enough to say that neither one nor the other sailed by the *Arbaces*, but caused themselves and their belongings to be transferred back to shore at the last moment.

A few hours later, as they sat together over their coffee and cigars in a private room of the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool, John Alexander Clare proceeded to give his companion an outline of his history from the time of the explosion of the lake steamer by which he was supposed to have been killed. Of that narrative all that need be given here is such a summary as will enable the reader to follow the sequence of events, the outcome of which was the unpremeditated meeting of himself and Lisle on board the *Arbaces*.

As may perhaps be remembered, Mr. Travis, Alec's business partner, could not reasonably have come to any other conclusion than that the latter had lost his life by the explosion of the *Prairie Belle*, seeing that week after week passed over without bringing any tidings of him; and, indeed, it was not till nearly three months had gone by that one day a tall, emaciated, almost ghastly figure stalked into the office, and for the moment all but made Mr. Travis's hair stand on end when, in hollow tones, it said: "Well, Frank, old fellow, how are you by now?"

It appeared that he had been picked up, clinging to a spar and all but insensible, nearly an hour after the explosion had taken place. His rescuer, a farmer who lived on the margin of the lake, caused Alec to be taken to his house, where he was carefully nursed and tended by the farmer's wife and daughter. He had been terribly bruised and half blinded by the explosion, and for several weeks he wandered in his mind and knew neither where he was, nor what had befallen him.

The farmer and his family belonged to the sect known as Quietists, and as they read no newspapers and held as little communion with the outside world as possible, it followed that Alec's name was omitted from the published list of the survivors of the explosion.

Small wonder was it that Travis almost looked upon his partner as on one come back from the grave.

Not till then did Alec learn of the inquiries which had been made about him during his absence. That the man who made them had come specially from England, Mr. Travis did not doubt, but as he had declined to state the nature of his business, there was nothing more to tell. The fact interested Alec but faintly, and soon passed out of his thoughts. He was a banished man; his wife had deserted him; his child was dead; and to him, after his accident and the illness which resulted from it, his past life gradually assumed the faded proportions of a dream, and not a real experience of his own.

And so one uneventful year after another dragged out its little span, the partners meanwhile prospering in business, and never being other than the best of friends.

At length, through the death of a relative, Mr. Travis succeeded to a considerable property and at once made up his mind to return to England. Alec, who for some years past had been pining for news from home, and who could not but remember that his father was getting well advanced in years, begged of his friend, on his arrival in the old country, to go to Mapleford and make certain inquiries *sub rosa*, and communicate the result to him. This Mr. Travis at once proceeded to do, writing Alec to the effect that his step-mother and his three half-brothers had all been some years dead, that a tablet to his, Alec's memory had been put up in the church where so many of his progenitors were buried, that his son had been adopted by Sir Gilbert as the latter's heir, and that his wife, under the designation of Mrs. Alexander Clare, was residing at the house known as Maylings, within a mile of the Chase.

Alec was astounded. His child had been a girl, and he had still by him, carefully preserved, his wife's heartless letter and the certificate of the infant's death. The result of Mr. Travis's letter was that, three weeks later, Alec landed at Liverpool.

What followed is already known to the reader. Alec's reason for not denouncing Luigi to Sir Gilbert at an earlier date was owing to his wife's absence in Italy, of which he had learnt through certain inquiries made on his account by Martin Rigg. Before taking any positive steps in the affair he was desirous of obtaining some certain evidence as to how far Giovanna was implicated in the fraud, his intention being to seek an interview with her immediately upon her return. Rispani's attempt on the strong room had brought matters to a climax a little sooner than he had anticipated.

He had not failed to hear of Luigi's departure next day from the Chase, but although his mission was accomplished and there no longer existed any reason why he should not return to his far-away home, he stayed on day after day, unable to tear himself from the haunts of his youth and the roof-tree where he had been born. But at length he had made up his mind that the next day should be the

final one of his stay, and as the evening shadows closed in he had gone to take his last walk in the grounds and his last look at the old mansion. It was the evening on which Sir Gilbert, finding himself alone indoors owing to the absence of Lady Pell and the others on their expedition to Dunarvon Castle, had gone for a twilight stroll in the shrubbery. From the shelter of a bank of evergreens he had been watched by his son as he passed slowly to and fro on the sward, puffing absently at his cigar and buried deep in thought. Hence it had come to pass that Alec was within a dozen yards of him when, overcome by a sudden dizziness, he stumbled and sank to the ground. His son's strong arms had lifted him and carried him into the library by way of the French window. Then, after depositing him on a couch and pressing a kiss on his forehead, Alec had rung the bell and made a hurried exit by the way he had come.

Next morning he had decided to delay his departure till he should be able to ascertain whether his father was suffering from any after effects of the attack of the previous evening, but the sudden appearance of Sir Gilbert as he emerged from the spinney on his way to the Tower, to all appearance in his usual health, had at once dissipated his fears on that score. It was through an upper window of the Tower that he had seen his father's approach; then had come the latter's unanswered summons at the door, and after that his departure across the park in the direction of the lodge. Alec had rightly surmised that it was a wish to question Martin Rigg that had brought Sir Gilbert to the Tower, but he had of course no knowledge of the motives which had prompted the visit. The same evening, a couple of hours after nightfall, he had emerged from the Tower, and after locking the door and depositing the key in a place where Rigg on his return would know where to look for it, he had crossed the park, no longer wearing the robe and cowl of the Grey Monk, but in his ordinary attire, and after walking to Westwood station, four miles away, had taken the train for London. After a brief stay in town, where nobody recognised him, and where he made no effort to seek out any of his old-time friends or acquaintances, he had journeyed to Liverpool and booked himself as a passenger by the *Arbaces*.

It is not difficult to imagine with what absorbed interest Everard Lisle listened to the narrative of Alec Clare. There still remained one point, and others would doubtless crop up later on, as to which his curiosity was unsatisfied. "Now that you have told me so much, Mr. Clare," he said presently, "perhaps you won't mind enlightening me as to the means by which you were enabled to make your way into and out of the Chase, as it seemed, whenever you chose to do so, without anyone being a bit the wiser."

Alec laughed. "The explanation is a very simple one, or so it will seem when you hear it," he said. "The room which used to be my mother's boudoir, and which has latterly, I believe, been assigned to Lady Pell, has two windows, both of which were originally

of the long, narrow, old-fashioned kind, but one of which, at my mother's desire, was modernised into what is called a French window, so that she might have a means of ready access to the garden—for she was somewhat of an invalid—without having to go round by the corridor and the side door. The other window was left untouched and, to all appearance, was not intended to open in any way. But one day, when a lad of ten, I lighted, quite by accident, on a secret spring which, when pressed in a particular way, caused the window to turn bodily on a swivel. Through the aperture thus formed any ordinary sized person could squeeze himself without much difficulty. I kept my discovery to myself, finding it useful on several occasions, when I was a rackety young fellow home for my holidays. To what use I put it of late you will have guessed already."

Next morning Alec Clare set out on his journey back to Withington Chase. As a rule he was much averse to Sunday travelling, but the present occasion was an altogether exceptional one. He already felt like another man. The ban which had been laid on him more than a score years before had at length been taken off. His father had written, "Come back to me—I want you." The long breach was about to be healed. All was to be forgiven and forgotten. Not as a lonely childless old man would his father henceforth drag out his days. And when he thought of what he himself was going back to, his heart felt full to the point of overflowing with deep thankfulness and that sort of chastened elation which, in the case of those who have seen much tribulation and are imbued with a sense of the unstableness of things mundane, often is all they dare permit themselves to feel.

Everard in the course of the previous afternoon had despatched a telegram to Sir Gilbert, informing him that he had overtaken "Mr. Alexander" before the latter had sailed, and that he, the aforesaid Mr. A., might be looked for at the Chase in the course of the afternoon of the morrow.

He further wrote a brief note to the Baronet informing him that he was called to London by some special private business, and that he had taken the liberty of claiming a couple of days' release from his duties at the Chase.

Everard's telegram arrived at the Chase while Sir Gilbert was at dinner. When he had read it he passed it to Lady Pell, who, as soon as she had taken in the message, gave it back to him with a look that was more expressive than words. Then he got up and left the room. He felt that he could not have spoken without breaking down. An hour later her ladyship went in search of him and found him in his study, seated by the fire with the telegram clasped tightly in his fingers. "May I come in?" she asked, standing with the handle of the open door in her hand.

"To be sure, Louisa. I am glad you have come. You are the only person who can understand what I feel without my needing to

say a word about it. Even now I can scarcely believe that in a few short hours I shall see my boy and hold his hand in mine. Not till death steps in between us, Louisa, shall anything part us again!"

It was Lady Pell who, next afternoon, met Alec at the railway station. Sir Gilbert would not trust himself to go. He was afraid that his emotion would overpower him, and he was nervously shy of making a scene in public. Nor was he at the door to welcome his son when the latter alighted at the Chase, but Lady Pell's instinct told her where to look for him. "Come with me," she said to Alec, and with that she led the way to the study. On reaching it she opened the door and motioned him to enter. Sir Gilbert, his tall, gaunt figure drawn to its fullest height, was standing on the hearth-rug, supporting himself with one hand on the chimney-piece, his face turned expectantly towards the door. He was trembling in every limb, and as Alec went quickly forward he put forth his arms and made a faltering step or two to meet him. "Oh, my son—my son!" he cried, his voice breaking into a sob as the last words left his lips.

Lady Pell gently closed the door and left them together.

CHAPTER XLVI.

UNKNITTED THREADS.

Everard Lisle stayed in Liverpool till Monday, on which day he took an early train up to town. His object in going to London was to endeavour by means of the address which Miss Matilda had given him to trace the present whereabouts—if he were still alive—of the man Kirby Griggs. Futile as the hope seemed that, even if he should succeed in finding him, Griggs would be able to supply him with any information that would further in the slightest degree the special purpose he had in view, he yet felt that he could not rest satisfied till he had interviewed him and heard from his own lips all that he had to tell.

The address supplied him was that of a firm of lawyers in Gray's Inn Square, in whose employ Kirby Griggs had been at the date of his interview with Mr. Matthew Thursby.

Fortunately for Everard's purpose, Griggs proved not only to be alive, but still in the service of the same firm—a third-rate clerk on a very limited salary. He was a thin, timid, nervous man, with an anxious, hungry sort of look, as though he rarely had as much to eat as he could have done with. When told the reason which had induced Everard to seek him out, he at once expressed his willingness to give him all the information that lay in his power; but as he was too busy to do so during office hours, he requested Everard to call upon him

between seven and eight o'clock the same evening at an address in the suburbs which he gave him.

There Lisle found himself at half-past seven and was at once ushered into the clerk's little parlour, in which sacred apartment—hardly ever entered between one Sunday and another—a fire had this evening been lighted in honour of his visit.

There proved to be no reticence on Griggs' part in discussing in all its bearings that strange episode of twenty years before, in which his sister had played so inexplicable and, ultimately, so tragical a part.

It appeared that she had always been of a romantic and flighty turn of mind, and an insatiable devourer of impossible romances and outrageous love-stories of the very commonest type of penny fiction. She had gone out to the States as maid to a wealthy elderly lady who had died there shortly after her arrival. The next news from Martha had been to the effect that she was on the eve of returning to England by the clipper-ship *Pandora*, and her brother was requested to meet the vessel on its arrival in dock. Why she had booked herself under the fantastical name of Mrs. Montmorenci-Vane her brother could not imagine, unless it were a name she had picked up in the course of her reading, and had taken a fancy to. Just as little could he understand why, in the presumed state of her finances, she should have chosen to travel as a saloon passenger. As for whence and from whom his sister had obtained the child which she had passed off on board ship as her own, and what possible object she could have had in view in perpetrating such a hoax—if hoax it could be called—was to Kirby Griggs still as much an enigma as it had been at the time; nothing had occurred in the interim to throw even the faintest ray of light on the affair.

Everard's heart sank within him. It was evident that the lawyer's clerk had nothing of consequence to relate beyond what was known to him already.

After musing awhile, he said: "I presume that nothing was found among your sister's luggage—no letters, or papers, or anything else which, if placed in the hands of anyone who was willing to devote both time and patience to following it up, might ultimately furnish a clue to the mystery we have just been discussing."

"There was nothing—nothing whatever found of the kind you mention," replied Griggs with a shake of the head. Then, after a pause, he gave a little deprecatory cough and added: "As I have no wish to hide anything in connection with the affair, it may perhaps be as well to mention that my sister's boxes contained a quantity of wearing apparel such as seemed, both to me and my wife, far above her station in life, and the only conclusion we could come to was, that it had most likely been a present to her from the lady who had died. After keeping it for three or four years in case any inquiry should be made about it, my wife gradually used it up in the manufacture of garments for our numerous olive branches."

Although Mrs. Griggs made a third at the interview, as yet she had not spoken more than a dozen words, but in the pause that now ensued she suddenly said: "The ring, Kirby—have you forgotten the ring? That might perhaps supply the gentleman with the clue he is looking for."

Griggs started, and his pale face took on an unwonted blush. "I had indeed forgotten the ring," he said, "but that it will in any way help to clear up the affair, I don't for one moment believe." Then turning to Everard, he added: "The ring to which my wife refers is a quite plain hoop of gold, in fact, just like a wedding-ring, except that it is about four times as massive. It was the only article of jewellery found among my sister's luggage, although she was said to have been wearing a gold watch and chain and several dress rings at the time she fell overboard. Unfortunately, about four years ago I was very much pressed for money and was compelled to put the ring in pledge, obtaining on it an advance of thirty shillings. I am sorry to say that I have never since been in a position to redeem it, but it has not been lost, because I have been careful to pay the interest as it fell due."

"As you say," replied Everard, "there is not much likelihood of a ring such as you describe this one as being helping me in any way to discover what I am in search of. Still, I should very much like to see and examine it, and if you will allow me to pay the cost of taking it out of pledge I shall be greatly obliged to you."

"Truth to tell, sir," answered Griggs with a shrug, "I haven't money enough of my own to spare to enable me to do so. But in any case, nothing can be done in the matter till to-morrow."

So Everard left money for the redemption of the ring and went his way.

At half-past seven the next evening he was again at the house of Kirby Griggs. The ring had been redeemed in the interim. It was what the lawyer's clerk had described it as being, a plain massive hoop of gold, but on the inner side Lisle's keen eyes detected what seemed to him like a faint tracery of some kind, but apparently so worn that without the help of a magnifying glass it was impossible to make out what it was intended to represent. Griggs, who admitted that he had noticed the marks, but without attaching any value to them, volunteered to obtain the loan of a lens from a working watchmaker who lived close by, and accordingly did so. With the aid of the lens and the exercise of some patience, Everard was enabled to make out that what to the naked eye had looked like so many meaningless scratches was in reality an engraved inscription which ran thus "J. A. C. to G. R. *Pour tout temps.*"

Scarcely had he succeeded in deciphering the inscription before it flashed across him that the words, "*Pour tout temps*" formed the somewhat arrogant motto of the Clares of Withington Chase, as also that the letters J. A. C. were the initials of John Alexander Clare.

By the time he got away from the house, taking the ring with him, t was too late to think of going down to the Chase before next morning. So he wandered about some of the quieter streets till a ate hour, turning over and over in his mind his discovery in connection with the ring, but nowhere finding an adequate solution of he singular problem which was thus put before him. From whichever oint of view he looked at the matter, it still remained as much a angle as at first. Out of a dozen questions which he asked himself, here was not one he could answer. He turned into his hotel a little efore midnight and went to bed, but sleep came to him only by fits nd starts, and all through the dark hours the same series of questions ept ringing their changes in his brain.

After an early breakfast he caught the eight-thirty train for Mapleford. A fly took him and his luggage from the station to Elm Lodge, from whence, a few minutes later, he walked across the park o the Chase.

Sir Gilbert had lingered over breakfast, talking to his son, and in he corridor Everard met him face to face, looking a dozen years ounger than when he had seen him last. The change in him was ndeed marvellous.

"What! back already?" he said beamingly. "I thought you ere going to take a few days' holiday in London. Why didn't you, h? Why didn't you? But we'll have no work to-day, that's certain. he best thing you can do will be to have the dog-cart out after ncheon and take your sweetheart for a drive—lucky dog that you re, to have won the love of such a girl!" Then his voice took on a eeper tone. "What a happy chance for me was that which brought ou and my son together at Liverpool and so gave Alec back to me eeks before I should otherwise have had him! I cannot help feeling as I somehow owe it all to you. Well, well"—laying a kindly hand on is shoulder—"when your wedding-day is here you will find that I ave not forgotten you." And with a smile and a nod he passed on.

Everard's most pressing object was to secure a private interview ith Mr. John Clare—as he was henceforward to be known to the orld, although to his father he would never be anything but Alec. ot till he should have recounted to the latter the history of the ring nd put it into his hands, would he go in search of Ethel and surprise er by his unexpected return.

Presently he found John alone in the library, hunting up some of he favourite authors of his youth, from whom he felt that he had een too long parted. Sir Gilbert was closeted with one of his nants in the study.

John Clare greeted Everard with a smile and a cordial grip of the and. The liking he had conceived for him during the few hours ey had spent together in Liverpool had not been in any degree ssened by what he had heard about him since, both from his father nd Lady Pell.

"I thought you were about to give yourself a holiday," he said, "and that we need not look to see you at the Chase for some days to come." He had already had his grizzled beard and heavy moustache carefully trimmed, and certainly he presented a much more civilised appearance than before.

"I was able to finish the business which took me to London in much less time than I expected," replied Everard. "The affair, however, has taken a turn wholly surprising and unexpected—one that seems to bring you, Mr. Clare, into connection with it, although as to the mode in which the connection in question originated I must confess that I am entirely in the dark."

"You excite my curiosity, Lisle. I hope you will not refuse to gratify it."

"Is there any place where we can secure half-an-hour to ourselves without fear of interruption?"

"Perhaps we had better go upstairs to my own room. No one will intrude upon us there."

"May I take the liberty of asking whether you have ever seen this ring before?" said Everard as soon as the two were seated opposite each other in John's dressing-room.

John took the ring and looked at it for a moment or two, as one in doubt. Then all at once a flash of recognition leapt into his eyes and every nerve in his body responded with a thrill. "Yes, I *have* seen this ring before—many years ago," he said slowly. "Have you any objection to telling me by what strange chance it came into your possession?"

"It was with that purpose I sought this interview. But the story is a long one, and at the beginning will doubtless seem irrelevant to the question you have just put to me."

"You shall tell it in your way. So long as the end of it furnishes me with an answer to my question I shall be satisfied."

"Some nineteen years ago," began Everard presently, "a certain clipper ship named the *Pandora* left New York for London having on board a number of passengers, among them being a certain Mrs. Montmorenci-Vane (that being the name by which she had booked herself), who, although she was dressed as a lady and wore a quantity of jewellery, had neither the manners nor the appearance of one. With her she had a child, a little girl only a few months old, to attend upon whom during the voyage, her own nursemaid having deserted her in New York—so her story ran—she engaged a woman from among the steerage passengers. Unfortunately, one dark night, Mrs. Montmorenci-Vane fell overboard and was lost.

"Among other passengers on the *Pandora* were two maiden ladies, sisters, of the name of Thursby, who, together with their brother, an elderly bachelor, were returning home after a brief visit to the States. The forlorn condition of the lost woman's infant touched the kind hearts of the sisters, and they made it their business to look after

the child's welfare during the remainder of the voyage, naturally expecting that some relations of its mother would be there to meet the ship on its arrival in dock. However, there proved to be no one there to inquire for Mrs. Montmorenci-Vane, but, instead, a lawyer's clerk of the name of Griggs, who had come to meet his sister, the latter having written to inform him that she would take passage by the *Pandora*. Well, in a photograph of the so-called Mrs. Vane the clerk at once recognised his unmarried sister Martha, who had gone out to the States a few months before in the position of lady's-maid. There could be no possible mistake about the photograph. The captain and the whole of the cabin passengers were prepared to affirm that it was a likeness of Mrs. Vane, who had fallen overboard, while Griggs was prepared to swear an affidavit that it was the likeness of his sister. The poor man was terribly puzzled, as well he might be. He could not in the least comprehend why his sister had chosen to call herself Mrs. Vane—whence she had obtained the fine clothes and the jewellery in which she had flaunted on board ship—and, above all, what possible object she could have had in passing off the child of some one else as her own offspring. In the result, he declined to have anything whatever to do with the child, whom he left on the hands of Mr. Matthew Thursby and his sisters to be dealt with in whatever way they might choose.

"What the Miss Thursbys chose to do, was to adopt the child and bring her up as their niece. As such she grew up, never suspecting that the sisters were other than her aunts in reality, and not till her nineteenth birthday, when a letter was put into her hands addressed to her by Mr. Matthew Thursby, who had died many years before, with instructions that it should be read by her on that day—were the facts of her early history, so far as they were known, revealed to her. That the revelation was a great shock to her cannot be doubted, but it made no difference whatever in the relations which had subsisted for so long a time between herself and the sisters. The secret was still kept to themselves, and to this day, the waif of the *Pandora* passes as the niece of the two Miss Thursbys. A little later she became companion, *pro tem.*, to Lady Pell, and accompanied the latter on her visit to Withington Chase. Doubtless you have already met Miss Thursby at luncheon and dinner, and so on, Mr. Clare."

"I have both met and noticed the young lady; indeed, when she and I are at table I find it difficult to take my eyes off her. She affects me in quite a singular way, the like of which I never experienced before. But that is not to the point just now. Pray proceed."

"The next fact needful for me to mention as bearing on my narrative—in what way you will presently understand—is, that Miss Ethel Thursby and I are engaged to be married." He spoke with a heightened colour and an added sparkle in his eyes.

"Ah! is that indeed so? I congratulate you with all my heart, Lisle."

"When, a few days ago," resumed Everard, "Sir Gilbert Clare placed in my hands a letter addressed to you at Pineapple City, with a request that I would at once proceed to America, search you out and give it into your hands, finding myself with a day to spare prior to the sailing of the steamer, I journeyed down to St. Oswyth's, where the Misses Thursby reside, with the object of putting certain questions to them. It seemed to me that there was just a faint chance that, while in the United States, I might be able, as a consequence of the inquiries I intended to set on foot there, to find the clue to the mystery surrounding the birth and parentage of her whom I hope shortly to call my wife; but I was desirous, first of all, to make myself thoroughly acquainted with every feature of the affair that had come under the cognisance of the sisters. As it fell out, however, they had nothing of any consequence to tell me which I did not know already. The only scrap of fresh evidence I brought away with me was the address of the man Griggs, who, in the portrait of Mrs. Vane, had recognised his sister. You know already, why I never got any farther than Liverpool on my way to the States. After parting from you, I went to London and was fortunate enough to find Griggs without difficulty; but, as in the case of the sisters, he had nothing to tell me which would in the least help to further the end I had in view. I was on the point of giving up the whole business in despair, when Mrs. Griggs happened to mention that among the luggage which had been claimed by the lawyer's clerk as his sister's property, there had been found a plain gold ring of very massive make. On expressing my desire to see the ring, I was told that circumstances had compelled Griggs to pledge it. But the following day saw it redeemed and placed in my hands. Perceiving that the inner side bore an inscription of some kind, I procured a lens and by its means was enabled to make out that part of the lettering represented the motto of the Clares of Withington Chase, and another part your own initials. Hence my reason for bringing the ring to you."

"I am glad, Lisle—very glad indeed that you have done so. For the present I will ask you to say nothing to anyone about what has passed between us this morning. You know, of course, that the Mrs. Clare who occupied Maylings for a short time was my wife?"

"She was known to everyone in the neighbourhood as Sir Gilbert's daughter-in-law."

"Can you tell me where to find her? It is requisite that I should see her with as little delay as possible."

"I have no knowledge of Mrs. Clare's movements; but her nephew Luigi Rispani, left me an address at which a letter or message would at any time find him. It would be no trouble to me to run up to

town by the next train, hunt up Rispani, and obtain from him the address of Mrs. Clare, with which he is pretty sure to be acquainted."

"If you will do that for me, Lisle, I shall be infinitely obliged to you."

"I will start at once. There is a train at twelve-thirty. If I have good luck, I ought to be back by seven o'clock."

John Clare held out his hand. "Bring me the address at any cost," he said.

The ring thus strangely recovered had been a present from him to Giovanna Rispani during the period of their brief courtship.

CHAPTER XLVII.

HUSBAND AND WIFE.

To John Clare's wife the world of late had become a greatly-changed place. She was alone in London, without a single creature of her own sex whom she could call an acquaintance, much less a friend. She had broken both with her uncle and Luigi. For the latter she had never cared. He had impressed her from the first as being not only morally unscrupulous—that was a defect which she might not have experienced much difficulty in condoning—but as being sly and deceitful into the bargain, and, in short, one of those people who are almost as dangerous to, and as little to be trusted by, those whom they call their friends as by those to whom they owe a grudge which they would gladly wipe off.

Captain Verinder she had learnt to like after a fashion. He was her mother's brother, and that of itself was enough to create a tie between them which, under ordinary circumstances, she would have been one of the last people to ignore. She had liked him for his *bonhomie*, for his persistent good-humour and his half-quizzical, half-cynical way of looking at men and things, and last, but not least, for the frequent doses of flattery he had been in the habit of administering to her, which, even while conscious that it was nothing more than flattery, had possessed the delightful property of raising her in her own estimation, and of causing her to think more highly of herself than she had ever done before.

But this was a state of things which had now come wholly to an end. Giovanna's feelings were very bitter against her uncle. She blamed him and him alone for everything that had happened to her; at his door she laid the entire load of her misfortunes.

It was quite true—and the fact was never lost sight of by her, for she rarely argued crookedly, as Luigi habitually did—that, but for the interest taken by Verinder in her case, in all probability she would

never have become aware that she was daughter-in-law to Sir Gilbert Clare. Yet, granting that point to the full, it was impossible for her to forget that it was wholly owing to his influence and persuasions that she had been lured into that career of fraud and double-dealing which, in her case, had ended in irremediable disaster. From her present knowledge of Sir Gilbert Clare she felt convinced that, had she have gone to him at first, as she had proposed to do, and told him the simple truth, far from turning his back upon her, he would have welcomed her as his son's widow, and have settled on her a liberal allowance, which would have been hers to the last day of her life. It made her hate her uncle when she thought of all that she had lost through weakly yielding to the glittering temptation he had so persistently dangled before her. Little by little she had wormed out of Luigi all the particulars of the Brussels episode, and she rightly argued that if Verinder had never introduced his nephew to the gaming-table the series of unfortunate events which resulted therefrom, and culminated in the discovery of Luigi in the strong-room, would never have come to pass. It was clearly the Captain and he alone who was to blame.

He had called upon her twice since their return to town, but her reception of him had been of the coldest; and when, on the occasion of his second visit, his request for a trifling loan of ten pounds was met by a distinct refusal, he perceived that his wisest course would be to keep away from his niece till time should in some measure have softened her rancour against him.

Giovanna had found a temporary home in one of those boarding-houses which abound in the neighbourhood of the west-central squares. But already she had begun to meditate a change. The demands on her purse were too many and, as it seemed to her, too exorbitant. Should she decide to stay in London, she must find cheaper rooms and make up her mind to live more economically in many ways. But just then she could not make up her mind to anything. She was a very lonely and a very miserable woman; indeed, the loneliness of her life sometimes appalled her. There were a number of other boarders in the house, and in the general drawing-room of an evening there was no lack of company of both sexes and of nearly all ages. But Giovanna, who had always been of a reserved and retiring disposition, had an utter distaste for associating with a mixed lot of people, with not one of whom she had anything in common, and, as soon as dinner was over, invariably went upstairs to her own sitting-room on the third floor. In the forenoons, when the weather was fine, she took long, solitary walks, sometimes in the Regent's Park, sometimes through the miles of West End shops, but rarely pausing to glance into a window. Invariably dressed in black, and with the upper half of her face closely veiled, but leaving visible the firm and beautiful contours of the mouth and chin, her tall and stately form drew many eyes to it as she slowly threaded her way through the crowd of promenaders, so

obviously indifferent to everyone and everything around her. There was about her, or so it seemed, an air of mystery, of romance even, which many of those who turned to gaze after her would have given something to be able to penetrate.

On a certain morning, just as Giovanna was getting ready to go for her usual walk, a message was brought her that there was a gentleman below who was desirous of seeing her. In the belief that it must be either her uncle or Luigi, they being the only visitors she had, she requested the servant to show him upstairs.

A minute later John Clare walked into the room.

Despite the changes which years had wrought in him, Giovanna knew him again the moment she set eyes on him, and the same instant a great fear took possession of her. An inarticulate cry broke from her lips; she shrank away from him with averting hands and terror-fraught eyes, and, when she could go no farther, she crouched trembling in a corner of the room. Her face wore the ghastly hue of death. She had never fainted in her life, and she did not now; but all the fibres of her being were stretched to that point of tension which touches the verge of madness. A little more and her brain would have given way. It was a strange mixture of terror that held her powerless, for, although she had at once recognised that this was no shadowy visitant from the tomb, there was about the affair an undoubted element of the supernatural. That her husband had come in the guise of an avenger one glance at his face had been enough to tell her, and surely it could be nothing less than a miracle which had brought him back to life! To Giovanna miracles were far from being the impossibilities which many of us deem them to be. She had grown up in an atmosphere of superstition, and not all the experience of after-life had quite served to eradicate the noxious weeds thus early implanted within her.

In the look with which John Clare regarded his wife there was an icy sternness such as might well strike with dread the heart of the unhappy woman. At that moment he bore a striking resemblance to his father, as Sir Gilbert had been before years and trouble had broken him down. For some moments he confronted his wife in silence as she cowered before him like some hunted creature driven to bay.

"At last we meet again!" he said, after a time. "You believed that I had died long years ago, but I am here, a living proof to the contrary. From me you have nothing to fear. I come neither to accuse nor to condemn. As you have dealt with the past, so will it deal with you; but certainly it is not for a fallible being such as I to set myself up as your judge."

He spoke slowly and unemotionally, without a trace of passion or even the faintest tinge of invective.

"I am here on purpose to ask you certain questions," he resumed,

"which I can but trust that you will answer truthfully and to the best of your ability. Will you not be seated?"

She did not answer him in words, but drew herself together as it were, and crossing to the opposite side of the room sat down. By this she had recovered from her fright, and her features had settled into a sort of stony hardness which effectually masked whatever emotions might be at work below.

John too sat down, but there was nearly the entire width of the room between them.

"I want you," he went on, "to carry your mind back to that letter, written by you nearly twenty years ago, in which you told me that our child was dead, that you had come to the conclusion you and I would be happier apart, and that you were on the eve of returning to your friends in Italy. You have not forgotten the letter of which I speak?"

"I have not forgotten it."

"After you had left Barrytown and started on your journey, what happened to you? Did you go direct to New York and at once take ship there?"

"I went direct to New York, but a few hours before the vessel sailed by which I had booked my passage I was seized with a fever and conveyed to a hospital, where I lay for weeks, part of the time out of my mind, and the other part so weak that speech was an impossibility."

"And when you came back to health and strength, it was to find that while you had been in the hospital your maid, a woman of the name of Martha Griggs, had absconded with all your belongings."

It was a bold guess on John Clare's part, but it told.

Giovanna half started to her feet and then sat down again. The mask of apathy fell from her face and a great wonder and curiosity took the place of it. "How did you discover that?" she gasped.

"I have discovered more than that," was John's unmoved reply.

"And the woman—Martha Griggs—is she still living? do you know where to find her?" demanded Giovanna with an eagerness she made no attempt to conceal.

"Martha Griggs was lost overboard on the voyage between New York and London."

"Lost overboard! And my child—what became of her?" She had again risen. Voice, eyes, hands—all asked the question.

On the instant a great light of gladness, the source of which Giovanna was at a loss to comprehend, flamed out of John Clare's eyes.

"So I have surprised your secret, have I?" he said, speaking very slowly.

For a few seconds she stared at him with bewildered eyes; then the truth dawned on her.

"Yes," she replied, "you have surprised my secret, if that is the way you choose to put it. But the child——"

"A child no longer, is alive and well, and at the present moment under her grandfather's roof at Withington Chase."

"At Withington Chase—she! How strange! How wonderful! But I am very glad—oh yes, you may believe me when I tell you that I am very glad! For, whatever you may think, I am not all bad." She crossed quickly to the window and stood there with her back towards him for fully three minutes.

Not till she had resumed her seat did John Clare speak again.

"What you wrote me about the child was a lie?" he said presently. It might be taken either as a question or an assertion.

"Yes—a lie," she replied with a little shrug. "It is as well at times to call things by their right names."

"And the certificate you sent me?"

"A forgery. Five dollars was the price I paid for it."

"But what was your object, if I may ask, or what was to be gained by inducing me to believe that the child was dead?"

"After I had made up my mind to leave you and go back to Italy, my one fear was that you would come after me and rob me of the child. To keep you from doing that I invented the story of its death. Myself alone, after the letter I had written you, I knew you would not trouble yourself to come after."

"Never was there a more heartless and cruel fraud perpetrated on anyone!" For the first time his voice vibrated with a suppressed emotion. Not for a little while would he trust himself to say more. Giovanna's only reply was a slight lifting of her brows.

"When you grew better and left the hospital did you make no effort to recover your child?" demanded John as soon as he felt that he could command himself sufficiently to speak again.

"I made every effort a woman in my position could make. You must remember that I had been robbed of money, clothes, everything. I was utterly destitute. Some charitable people interested themselves in my case and the police were communicated with, but nothing came of their inquiries. Then a wild notion took hold of me that the woman, in the belief that I was past recovery, might have made her way to Italy with the child, and that I should find it under my father's roof when I got back to Catanzaro. The same charitable people found me enough money to take me home; but as you know, neither the woman nor my child was there. After that, rather than be called upon to tell and tell again the history of that time, I preferred to give it out that my child was dead. To my father alone was the truth known."

She ceased, and to John Clare it seemed that there was nothing more to be said. He had learnt all that he had come to learn. The missing links had been found; not one was wanting; the chain was complete.

"There is no reason why I should intrude myself any longer upon you," he said as he rose and pushed back his chair. "You have been frankness itself with me, and so far I thank you. I know not what your pecuniary resources are, nor do I seek to know, but I do not forget that you are still my wife and that, as such, a monetary arrangement of some kind will have to be come to with you. I will take my father's opinion in the matter, and in the course of a few days my lawyer shall be instructed to communicate with you."

"And my child—the child of whom I was robbed!" It was like the cry of some animal despoiled of its young made articulate.

She had started to her feet as it broke from her lips, and she now confronted him with heaving bosom and extended hands, her face marble-white and her great black eyes glowing with intense fire.

John had taken up his hat and had reached the door, when her cry caused him to turn.

"*Your* child!" he said with a quiet concentrated scorn that made each word seem a stab. "*My* child, you mean. You long ago forfeited all right to call her yours. What! would you dare to stain her spotlessness with your guilt? Would you, with such a past as yours, dare to claim her for your daughter, and look to her to call you mother? Is it your wish that she should be told the story of your life? Or would you prefer to pose before her as the innocent victim of circumstances which you could not control? No, I will not believe you are quite so depraved as that. As you cannot but know, her way and yours lie wide apart. You did your utmost to rob me of her when she was a child, and now that I have found her she belongs to me alone."

As he went out and shut the door behind him, all the strength seemed to go out of Giovanna's limbs. She sank to the floor and there crouched with clasped hands and bowed head. "He is right—he is right," she moaned. "I am not fit to tie the latchets of her shoes."

(*To be concluded.*)

FRIENDSHIP—"HEAVEN DESCENDED."

By the Author of "Gentleman Stephens," etc.

THE subject of friendship must be approached with faith. Those who go crusading in its cause must not look for support to the "negative" characters with which this world abounds, but to the much-believing, which by no means implies, Seek for them among the fools. Since human nature is a mixture of good and evil, it is no fool's maxim to trust in the stronger influence and final triumph of the stronger power; and to such as are believers in its divine origin, there is an excelsior in this view which refuses any limits to hope as to the destiny of humanity.

Faith in human nature once conceded and it follows that the much-believing will be not only friend, in the Good Samaritan sense, to every beggar, stranger, culprit, rival and foe whom he meets, but a man of many actual friendships; and these will probably number many "curiosities" among them. In youth he will be drawn to some "Matthew, seventy-two"; in age to many of that band of juniors who hold in their turn the forefront of life's stage.

He must be prepared for sneer of shallowness, self-interest, and love of popularity. The hare with the many friends is not as extinct as the mammoth, and there are veneerings everywhere; but every virtue runs into some excess, where it becomes a vice, and the much-believing is not likely to steer his course by so fickle a star as public opinion.

One of the benefits of a large circle of friends, besides preserving us from narrowness, is that it brings into play sides of our character often unrecognised by those with whom we live, and which may be a revelation even to ourselves. Once see in another that *something* not to be put into words which makes friendship possible, and we may be sure in the end it will justify itself.

But with one individual we may agree so vitally on one important subject as to afford to be wide as the poles on numberless lesser points; while with another, harmony on the oft-recurring trivialities of life make it possible to differ without loss of love on some fundamental question. We may be mentor to one friend and pupil to another and age have nothing to say in the matter; in some friendships the intellectual side will be the chief meeting-ground, and a very pleasant one too: in others it will be set aside for the secondary thing it is, and our more spiritual selves, or some practical or domestic edition of the same, rule the intercourse. Yet we may truly sign our autographs to all these selves, and many more; and while some friendships clasp hands at a midnight hour of bereavement, the first link with others as real may be rather one of laughter.

There is refreshment in the company of one whose lot is no

reproduction of our own; one can get so mortally weary of oneself, even in the newest dress, in the nauseating excess of a many-mirrored room. Diversity, indeed, will often give to friendship usefulness as well as piquancy, like the union of knife and fork, without which dinner were at a standstill.

Yet it by no means follows one can play knife to every fork one meets. With some excellently-formed forks, whose lion-mark too proclaims them silver, one seems to turn to salt-spoon instead, or asparagus-tongs, or nut-cracker. But when one has been floundering at a disadvantage in either of these guises, getting through little work, and that ill done, it is a joyful moment—a moment of champagne and laughing-gas—to find oneself once more a genuine knife in presence of some fork that restores us to activity and ease!

Warning voices are often raised against the perils of idealising, yet it means prophecy far oftener than shipwreck, and is, at worst, a far nobler error than detraction. To be pictured by some generous heart beyond our deserts, as being what we only long to be, is one of the best lessons in humility, as well as incentives to soul progress.

> "We in dark dreams are tossing to and fro,
> Pine with regret, or sicken with despair;
> The while she bathes us in her own chaste glow,
> And with our memory wings her own fond prayer."

Surely, therefore, it is well to be idealisers of others, clear-sighted to that best of them that shall survive the ages. Sleary, the manager's appeal—Sleary, of 'Hard Times' memory—"Make the betht of uth, Thquire, and not the wortht of uth," has a sound principle to back it, like so much of the kindly philosophy of Dickens' matchless pen. Michael Angelo not only saw the angel in the unhewn marble, but won it forth. Prophecy and fulfilment alike possible to that great nature; nay, possible to us, too, and an obligation laid on everyone, so that when in Heaven the full vision bursts on us of what some now-erring soul can come to, we may not be shamed to think we failed to recognise any of its features while in their imperfection here, or, alas, hindered their development by our cold disbelief and blame.

But to return to idealising; and it is a task easy of fulfilment towards those "best friends," who sit on the Treasury benches of our affections. The genuine friend, like Fox of the Martyrs, "Scorns the praise of impartiality." If the first two lines of Longfellow's verses do not apply to all cases, the remainder can and does in the spirit to all friendships that transcend the ordinary.

> "Perhaps on earth I never shall behold,
> With eye of sense, your outward form and semblance;
> Therefore to me ye never will grow old,
> But live for ever young in my remembrance.
> Never grow old, nor change, nor pass away!
> Your gentle voice will flow on for ever,
> When life grows bare and tarnished with decay,
> As through a leafless landscape flows a river."

And speaking of "best friends" (always an honoured minority), what is it makes the perfection of friendship beyond that tenderness and truth that Emerson claims for its essentials? Equality of age, condition, and position must surely here stand high, for though the two last points may vary when the friendship is well-rooted and grown with little or no danger, they count at the outset for much.

Harmony of disposition and taste are, of course, the very letters out of which friendship is spelt, and its perfection must ever rest on an identical creed. Low church or high may honour each other's sincerity, Quaker and Ritualist may meet on many a fundamental truth, Broad Church and Devotee may sing from the same hymn-book with offence to neither; but where perfection is considered, let there be no division on these most vital articles of faith, from which the whole conduct of life takes its rise.

With deep harmony here many a minor unlikeness, as has been already said, may pass unchallenged; and let us not forget that "He who wants a faultless friend goes friendless." Here, as in all relations of life, many a restraint must be endured to refine and ennoble intercourse; while we should be "Free as an Arab of our beloved," and leave him equally so. No stranger should be readier than the intimate friend with all courtesies of life; or quicker to honour those silences and reserves that even at most confidential hours, circumstances, known or unknown, may impose on his companion's revelations.

And the sparkle of playfulness should surely never long be absent from the union of congenial natures, and Sydney Smith's inspired saying as to what constitutes a wise man can be quite as truly applied to an ideal friend: "He should have as much sense as if he had no wit; and as much wit as if he had no sense!"

And what a friend he was—Sydney Smith! with his written and spoken talks with Jefferey over their work, and what a happy commentary on his witty maxim! And Scott, yet more, in whose dedication cantos to "Marmion" seem embalmed the lineaments of typical friendships of the first water; and whose clubs and every interest from youth to age (such age as he was to know) were one long tribute laid on the shrine of kindred spirits.

The century to which "In Memoriam" belongs has been rich indeed in friendships, and when one thinks that "such as these have lived and died," it seems superfluous to go to antiquity for further examples. But those are beautiful words that come down to us through Sir Theodore Martin's interpretation from the lips of Horace, spoken to his best of friends, and the truth of their prophecy well may make them sacred; for Mæcenas died B.C. 19, and Horace did not linger many months behind.

"Ah, if untimely Fate should snatch thee hence,
Thee, of my soul a part,
Why should I linger on, with deadened sense,
And ever aching heart,
A worthless fragment of a fallen shrine?
No, no, one day shall see thy death and mine!

Think not that I have sworn a bootless oath.
Yes, we shall go—shall go,
Hand link'd in hand, where'er thou leadest, both
The last sad road below!
Me neither the Chimæra's fiery breath,
Nor Gyges, even could Gyges rise from death,
With all his hundred hands from thee shall sever."

But for harvest of such classic friendships as these in ancient times and modern, sagacious sowing must go, and this must be done chiefly in youth, even though maturer friendships have vindicated their right to fame over and over again. Friendships may be in the main "born, not made," following some elective affinities no less than love; yet it is well, oh, youth, to strike at one moral attribute in the character, at least, and see some distinct fruit of it in the daily trials of life ere quite losing the head over the fascinating exterior.

The truest living friendship the writer knows was founded on one side only on wondering admiration of the sweet meekness with which sundry privations were borne, imposed by delicacy of health on one yet able to join in society's doings. Only a croquet-ground, only loyal docility to duty, only genial perception of the humour of the situation, only unabated sympathy, pleasures, much-loved and no longer shared; but something in the situation "gave pause" to one on-looker, and as evidences of gold chain the experienced digger into opening a "claim" forthwith, so something of the sort was done here; and that friendship counts by decades now, and the gold that croquet-ground hinted of has rung true through their every year.

And what of friendship's sterner obligations? Some would comfortably believe them non-existent, and to a mind that cannot see that inconvenient, unromantic thing—two sides to a question—may almost become so; but where principle is stronger than prejudice, warning and reproof may be asked for over and above the "iron sharpening iron" which strengthens each.

And, as in Art the pupil had best begin where he will assuredly end, with the best models, it is well to study here the highest friendship earth has seen.

There were twelve disciples, and He called them friends. He was Master and Lord as well, but thinking of Him as a Friend only—ideal in that as in all besides—turn to three rebukes He gave His friends.

Once—and this was where the wrong was a personal one—it was a look alone, the much-recalling look to Peter. To those who on certain theories have "spoken often one to another," a look may need no interpretation; from its mute remonstrance the self-convicted soul makes no appeal, but goes out full of softened memory and remorse to weep bitterly.

So gently was the charge of faithlessness conveyed to Thomas that one scarcely thinks of it as reproof. Only a few words at the last, going home like a lancet's curing wound, spoke of the blessedness of

those who see not, yet believe; and how passionately must he of the vehement protests have wished that he had closed with that highest virtue of linking faith to love while yet the chance was his.

But to Peter again, Peter with whom our fellow-feeling is so great, for to him was earlier uttered the severest rebuke of all, the "Get thee behind me, Satan," never chronicled as uttered to Judas.

No over-indulgence here, or compromise with plain speaking, a mere suggestion of worldliness, and from a beloved disciple, met with one of the most scathing utterances in the Gospels. And yet it stands redeemed twice over from being thrust of enemy. The "I have prayed for thee," showed that He kept the friend apart from his errors; and reference to His work in the future gave denial to any hint of abandonment. It is these that make that stern rebuke to a friend *in extremis* a model to all time, uncompromising, sharp, but leaving healing and hope behind.

Yet even abandonment, temporary and conditional, may be necessary in some cases; only not below the surface should that abandonment extend, nor ever the link of prayer be broken for those whom we have once called friend. And the ready and generous admission that although a veil is hung over it to-day, the door of reconciliation is left gladly, yearningly open as regards the future, may save wounds from mortifying that would otherwise slay not only a friendship but a soul.

That hint of great things expected yet from Peter, great things for the very One rebuking them—what a contrast it is in its gentle encouragement to the proud unbending attitude so often preserved to an estranged friend. Well may it strike home to our wondering hearts, showing us in a flash, as it does, one glimpse of what God's notion is of the truth and tenderness exacted from us by friendship and by friends; a rallying to the right side, trust in our worthiness in answering to the appeal, and affection that draws us to His heart by bands of forgiveness, encouragement and love.

But on those deeper things of life, enough. To those who have wrecked on other shoals, to those who sigh for some new interest on the treadmill of time, we would say, Try Friendship; it can give both gold and flowers, both melody and strength, and interpret some of those "deeper things," to the great enlarging of our vision. And then in Heaven:

"Dear friend, when in the earth below
We spoke upon our future fate,
And feared each other not to know,
We little guessed this fairer state;
Unhoped-for joys, undreamed-of powers,
All knowledge, feeling, friendship, more,
For dying seeds, now living flowers—
I never knew you, friend, before!"

FOUND WANTING.

By F. M. F. Skene.

I.

EVELYN CLIVE was decidedly above the average of most young women of her age in mental power and high culture. She had many rare gifts—a crystal purity of truth—a delicate sense of honour and dauntless moral courage—but she was lacking in one of the most essential qualities for a safe passage through this difficult world, she did not possess discrimination of character. At least, if it formed any part of her generally "right judgment in all things" it failed her in the most momentous crisis of her life, for she had given herself with all the deep affections of her strong nature to a man who was not worthy of her.

Miss Clive's friends and acquaintances would not have been disposed to endorse this opinion. It was universally believed that she was about to make a most suitable and satisfactory marriage.

Lord Romanes, to whom she was engaged, was a man of irreproachable character. He was a few years older than herself, he was strikingly handsome, and he was the possessor of a fine old castle in one of the midland counties, of which Evelyn, with her *distingué* air and graceful manners would do the honours admirably. Also the wealth which her father, a celebrated judge, had left to her, his only child, would be very useful in enabling her *fiancé* to improve his estate, which had suffered from the prevailing agricultural depression. His most prominent characteristic was an intense pride of birth, and Evelyn was perfectly aware of it, but it did not affect her personally, as she sprang from a good old family herself, and she believed that the facts of heredity can prove, even in these socialistic days, that a long line of noble ancestors has the power to confer on the descendants certain chivalrous qualities which do not naturally pertain to persons of humbler origin. Evelyn was blind, however, to the contemptible personal vanity and the overweening selfishness which lay at the root of Lord Romanes's apparently fine qualities, and, like a true woman, she set him up on a pedestal as a golden idol, without ever discerning the feet of clay, and offered up to him the entire worship of a most faithful and loving heart.

They were to be married in the spring, and Miss Clive had been spending Christmas at Romanes Hall with her betrothed and his young sister Lilith, the proprieties of the position being supplied by a ponderous aunt of the most dense and obtuse description, whose ideas for the time being were limited to a consideration of what her nephew's *chef de cuisine* would be likely to produce in the way of condiments during her stay at the Hall, and the possibility of securing

a comfortable chair apart from the other guests, wherein she might slumber at ease in the evenings after dinner.

It is thus that Lady Wrexham is engaged on the occasion when we first see the various persons with whose history we have to deal. She lies back sleeping peacefully, her arms folded over the crimson velvet dress which clothes her ample proportions. Evelyn is at the piano playing a soft accompaniment to Schubert's "Farewell," which she is singing with exquisite taste and purity of style. She has a lovely melodious voice, with an undertone so strangely pathetic that it touches even the most callous of her hearers. She is very fair and pleasant to look upon, with her clear grey eyes eloquent of truth and candour, and her singularly sweet expression; her delicately-moulded features are pure and colourless as if cut in marble, but the soft rose tinge on her cheek tells of perfect health and a mind at ease. Her pretty evening dress is black in remembrance of the father whom she had lost rather less than a year before, and it is without ornament save a crimson camellia which her lover had placed in her bodice with nis own hands.

His young sister Lilith, who stands by her side, is a complete contrast to her. She is some five years younger, scarcely yet seventeen years of age, and white and fragile as the flower whose name she bears. The light falls unrestrained round her lovely child-like face, and her whole appearance gives an impression of weakness and shrinking timidity; there is also a shade of unspeakable sadness, and almost, it would seem, of terror on her pallid countenance, and Evelyn's touching song brings tears to her limpid blue eyes. Her brother, standing with his tall commanding figure erect at a little distance, listens with evident pleasure to the music which satisfies all the requirements of his refined taste, but there is no sign of emotion on his proud, handsome face.

It is far otherwise with a man who sits apart, almost hidden behind a heavy curtain, with his eyes fixed immovably on Evelyn's face. Lyon Everard had been a *protégé* of her father's in the days when he was a struggling young barrister, and now, at the age of five-and-thirty, he had, by his own energy and perseverance, attained to a high place in his profession. Evelyn had a great regard for him, but that was all; for Edgar—Lord Romanes—dominated her whole being so completely that there was little room even for friendship to have a place in her thoughts. As for Lyon Everard, if the sun had vanished altogether from the heavens it could not have made his horizon so hopelessly dark as the disappearance of Evelyn Clive out of his life, for she was more than all the world to him, albeit he knew well that he was absolutely nothing to her, as now the mournful words of her song smote on his ears—

"Voici l'instant suprême,
L'instant de nos adieux;
O toi, seul bien que j'aime,
Sans moi retourne aux cieux——"

a wave of anguish passed over him which made the strong man writhe with intolerable pain—for he knew that she, his only treasure, indeed was about to pass away into a paradise of love from which he must be for ever excluded.

While the song proceeded there was a sudden movement on the part of Lilith which was unobserved either by Lord Romanes or anyone else in the room. Some sound seemed to have caught her attention outside the window which opened on a flight of steps that led into the shrubberies surrounding the house; with a perfectly noiseless step Lilith passed behind the curtains that hung over it and disappeared.

Evelyn sang one or two more songs at the request of the assembled guests and then rose, saying to Lord Romanes, "I must go to the fire to get warm, I feel quite chilled; there seems to be a draught of cold air coming from some of these windows. Are any of them open?"

"I think not," he answered; "I saw them all closed myself, but I will look." He went from one to another, and when he came to the window nearest the piano and drew back the curtain, he exclaimed with surprise—"This is open! how can it have happened?"

He went out through it and stood for a moment on the upper step and looked round; all seemed quiet and peaceful in the bright moonlight, and he came back into the room, closing the window as he said to Evelyn—"It must have been carelessly fastened, and so burst open; it is quite too cold for anyone to have gone out, though it is a fine clear night."

The evening came to an end without Lilith's absence having been observed by anyone. Lady Wrexham roused herself from her premature slumbers, assuring Evelyn she had derived the greatest pleasure from her beautiful songs, of which she had not heard one note, and then hospitably conducted her lady guests to their apartments. Evelyn waited for a moment to bid good-night to Lord Romanes; who was going out by another door to the smoking-room with the gentlemen of the party, and so she came out alone into the hall.

So soon as she appeared, Lilith's maid sprang from behind a pillar where she had hidden herself while the other ladies passed, and came flying up to Evelyn. "Oh, ma'am, will you please come at once to Miss Romanes; she wants to see you as quickly as possible. She sent me to watch for you an hour ago; she wanted you then, and I was to bring you instantly if I could."

"But what is the matter? I hope she is not ill."

"I do not know what is troubling her I am sure, ma'am, only she is in a terrible way."

Evelyn wasted no more time in questions, but ran rapidly up-stairs to Lilith's room and entered it without waiting to knock at the door, as a faint sound of moaning could be heard within. She was beyond

measure startled and alarmed at the sight of Lilith, who had flung herself on the floor, apparently in a paroxysm of distress, while half smothered cries escaped from her lips. The diaphanous white dress in which she had looked so lovely that evening was torn and disordered, and her long fair hair tossed wildly back from her face streamed in confused masses over the carpet. She had heard the door open, and before Evelyn could speak, she had started to her feet and seized her by the arm while she shrieked out the words:

"Oh! save him, Evelyn, save him! You alone can do it. Go quickly or it may be too late. Why have you delayed so long? Perhaps even now he is lying wounded—bleeding; if he dies I must die too, for I can never forgive myself."

She almost tried to drag her friend to the door, but Evelyn stood firm, and said to her kindly but decidedly—"My dear Lilith, you must explain yourself; I do not know of whom you are speaking or what you wish me to do; tell me the meaning of it all, quietly if you can."

"It is Arthur Moore, who has been driven to despair; you know him and his fatal love for me; it is he who may die this night if you do not save him."

Arthur Moore! Evelyn heard the name with dismay, for she knew that he was the object of Lord Romanes' intense indignation and resentment, and that his anger would be terrible if he found out that Lilith had been in communication with him. He was a young man of inferior birth, who had most unfortunately made acquaintance with Lilith when she was spending a few weeks at the seaside under the sleepy chaperonage of Lady Wrexham. She had been walking on the sands, while her aunt reposed on a seat at a little distance, when her parasol was blown out of her hand by the wind and fell into the sea. Moore passing at the time, on the impulse of the moment, plunged into the water half up to his knees and rescued it; he came back in his dripping clothes to give it to her, and Lilith could not but thank him warmly. It was not wonderful that her lovely face and sweet refined tones awoke in him an access of love at first sight which soon developed into an overmastering passion; he haunted her steps, he took every opportunity of speaking to her, and when she went home he followed and established himself at the village inn near Romanes Hall and made desperate efforts to win her to himself. He had caught her fancy, and she believed that she loved him, but her feeble nature was not capable of any deep or enduring affection.

So long as her little romance was unknown to her brother, she met her lover frequently in the most retired part of a wood at some distance from the house, and indulged in much sentimental talk with the young man, who simply adored her. But when the matter became known to Lord Romanes through an accidental revelation, his furious

rage at the idea of a tradesman's son daring to approach a daughter of his noble race, completely appalled his timid young sister.

She both loved and feared her brother, and she knew that she was entirely under his control till she came of age four years later. She succumbed at once to his will and promised to obey his orders—never again to have the smallest communication with the young man whom Lord Romanes designated as an insolent scoundrel. With Moore himself he dealt in a very summary manner, sending his man of business to him with a message that caused the aspiring lover's immediate disappearance from the neighbourhood.

His love was genuine, however, and it subjugated his whole being for the time to an extent which made him feel in all sincerity that life would be intolerable to him if he were to be finally parted from Lilith.

That day he had managed to convey a note to her, telling that he could not and would not live without her; he would destroy himself and put an end to his agony, but he must see her once again to bid her an eternal farewell. She could not refuse that last prayer of a dying man; he would conceal himself in the shrubberies near the drawing-room windows that evening; she could easily slip out while music was going on. If she failed him, she would hear of him the next morning lying cold and dead in the wood where they had met so often.

"And I went to him, Evelyn," she continued; "I slipped out while you were singing. Could I help it? It was to save his life; but I could not. He will kill himself if you do not go to prevent him; you, who are so strong and brave!"

Evelyn hesitated, greatly perplexed, and at last she gave way; the girl's anguish overcame her scruples, and she felt it might really be the means of saving a man's life.

"I will go, Lilith," she said at last, "do not distress yourself so wildly; I will do all I can to save him."

She snatched up the girl's cloak which lay near, and wrapped herself in it, and then ran swiftly and noiselessly down the great staircase to the outer door, which she opened and went out without having been observed by anyone.

Evelyn knew her way to the wood very well, and this strange expedition at a late hour on a cold winter night would not have troubled her at all, but for her consciousness that Lord Romanes would most highly disapprove of the proceeding. She almost shuddered when she thought of the violence of his anger against the young man and Lilith herself, if he ever learned what had taken place that night.

She sped on, however, at a swift pace, and the bright moonlight penetrated even the recesses of the wood sufficiently to enable her to distinguish the object of her search.

He had stationed himself where the clear light could fall on a piece

of paper he had torn from his pocket-book, upon which he was writing a few words rapidly with his pencil. Evelyn judged rightly that it was a last message to Lilith, for she caught the gleam of a revolver, and there was a look on his livid face which showed that it was indeed no groundless threat the weak-minded young man had made. She saw that she was just in time, and hurried towards him.

He started violently at her sudden appearance and guessed her purpose at once, for he knew her by sight, though he had never spoken to her; his only thought was then, that he would not be thwarted in his dark design. He did not speak, but, flinging away the paper on which he was writing, he took the revolver in his right hand, raised it to his head and fired. Evelyn had only time to fling herself upon his arm and alter the direction of the shot so that it took no fatal effect and only grazed his cheek, causing a superficial wound from which, however, the blood flowed freely.

He staggered back against a tree, confused by the shock and the failure of his purpose, and he made no resistance when she took the revolver from his hand and flung it among the brushwood; then only he moaned out:

"Oh, why have you been so cruel! I should have been without pain or consciousness by this time had you not stopped me; you have deprived me of my only hope of relief from intolerable misery."

"I have saved you from a wicked and a cowardly act," she answered firmly, "and I shall not leave you till I have tried at least to bring you to your senses, out of all the hopeless folly of your late proceedings." He swayed from side to side as she spoke, and she saw that he was becoming faint from nervous excitement; at once she took her handkerchief and deftly bound up the wound in his cheek with it, then she drew his arm within her own and bade him lean upon her without scruple.

Evelyn was naturally energetic and full of resources, and she had rapidly thought of the best plan to pursue under the difficult circumstances; she knew that there was a cottage on the outskirts of the wood, to which she thought Moore might walk with her help, even in his state of prostration.

"Come with me," she said, "and I will take you to a place of shelter."

He seemed to have lost all power and let her lead him away without protest. Their progress was slow, but it was not very long before she brought him safely to the labourer's cottage which she remembered to have seen. The inmates were in bed and asleep, but Evelyn knocked loudly on the door, and after a few minutes it was unlocked by an elderly woman attired in a remarkable costume with her husband's frieze coat flung over her night dress.

"What do you want rousing folks this time o' night," she asked sullenly.

"This gentleman has had an accident and is hurt," said Evelyn

"I want you kindly to let him stay here for the night; I will attend to his wound myself, and you can go back to bed; I will pay you well," she added, for her experience of life had taught her how easily the doors of the lower classes can be opened with a silver key.

The woman looked at her closely for a moment; she did not know her, as it was Evelyn's first visit to Romanes Hall, but she saw at once that she was a lady, and there was that in the bright countenance, with its clear candid eyes, which took complete effect even on her somewhat dense perceptions.

She drew back and opened the door wide so that Evelyn and her charge could enter, and Arthur Moore at once sank down into a wooden chair which stood by the hearth; the fire was still smouldering, and the woman flung some wood upon it which soon burned up into a blaze; she looked compassionately on the young man's white face as Evelyn bound the handkerchief round his head more firmly, finding that it quite stopped the flow of blood and that the wound was not in the least serious.

"The poor gentleman looks very bad," said the woman. "Shall I warm him a drop of soup; I have some here which they sent me from the Hall to-day for my husband who is ill, and I can soon make it ready."

"Pray do, I shall be very much obliged to you," said Evelyn, "it is just what he requires."

The nourishment was soon ready, and sitting down beside Moore she fed him with it as if he had been a child, thinking to herself as she did so that he was in all respects a singularly weak specimen of humanity. The warm food soon brought back the colour to his lips, and he roused himself sufficiently to sit up in the chair and look with a bewildered gaze at Evelyn.

"You can go back to bed now," she said to her hostess; "you have been very kind and I will see that you are well compensated; but the gentleman must stay here for a few hours, and I will remain with him; we need not keep you from your rest any longer."

The woman was glad enough to go back to her ailing husband, and Evelyn remained alone with her very undesirable *protégé*. Moore had quite recovered from his temporary faintness, and he sat up in his chair and listened respectfully while Evelyn preached him a sermon which might have done credit to the most eloquent bishop in his pulpit. She showed the young man the utter madness of aspiring to Lilith Romanes, and then in grave and emphatic tones she pointed out the enormity of the crime of self-murder, the crime that could never be expiated by repentance, and the wickedness of thus bringing ruin and collapse on a life that had been given him for high and noble purposes.

By the time she ceased to speak Arthur Moore sat shame-faced and convinced before her, ready to change his whole course of action and do whatever she might advise.

"There's my difficulty, Miss Clive," he said helplessly, stretching out his hands. "I do not know what to do with myself; Lord Romanes wrote such a letter to my father that he turned me out of doors and said he would have nothing more to do with me; it was partly that, as well as my love for Miss Lilith, which made me feel as if the grave were my only refuge; I have no means, no prospect."

Evelyn was silent for a moment; then she said, "Might it not be best for you to emigrate? You could begin a new life in the colonies, and with your business habits you would soon find employment."

"I should like it beyond everything," he exclaimed eagerly. "It is what I have long desired, but my father would never help me in the matter. It would be the making of me, and I could soon forget all this misery. I have a cousin doing well in Queensland, who has written home a dozen times asking me to join him, but I have no money."

"If that is the only obstacle in the way, we can soon remove it," said Evelyn with her bright smile; "I shall be very glad to help you with the necessary funds, provided you will promise me utterly to give up all your past follies and to live as a sensible straightforward man for the future."

"I will, I will," he exclaimed energetically. "I give you my word of honour that I will follow your advice on all points, and I shall be deeply grateful for your help."

Having reached this satisfactory conclusion Evelyn at once made her arrangements for putting an end as quickly as possible to the eminently disagreeable vigil she was keeping. She told Moore that there was a train for London at an early morning hour, which started from a country station at no great distance, and that he must go by it, leaving her his address in town where she would send him a cheque for two hundred pounds on the following day; he was to sail by the very first vessel he could find going straight to Queensland, and never again, as long as he lived, was he to attempt to hold the smallest intercourse with any of the Romanes family, including herself.

She had so completely subjugated the weak foolish young man that he obeyed her without the smallest demur. It was already time that he should start for the station, and Evelyn thought it safest to go with him so far herself, in case his faintness returned.

She called to her hostess who came down at once, and paid her so liberally for the accommodation she had afforded them, that the good woman felt a keen desire that this lady might in the future bring many wounded gentlemen to pass the night in her cottage.

Then Evelyn went out into the lingering darkness with her charge, of whom she heartily desired to rid herself as quickly as might be. She soon saw that his strength was fairly restored, and after walking in silence by his side all the way, she stopped short as soon as the lights of the station appeared.

Then in the grey winter's dawn Evelyn turned to go home with her utmost speed.

As she did so, she saw that a man was standing close to her, evidently on the watch, and he at once peered into her face with an apparent desire to make certain of her identity. He wore a dress which might be that of a game-keeper or more probably of a poacher, for his demeanour was decidedly insolent. Evelyn drew herself up, and giving him one calm, haughty glance, walked past him and was soon on her way to the Hall. The servants were already astir when she arrived, and the doors unlocked, so she was able to enter unseen, and ran swiftly upstairs to Lilith's room.

II.

Evelyn found Lilith Romanes still in her evening dress, crouching down in a low chair wan and miserable. She had not attempted to go to bed. Evelyn speedily set her mind at rest. She gave her briefly an account of what had passed, and what had been arranged. Lilith flung herself into Evelyn's arms with a cry of delight.

"Oh, how thankful I am! what peace, what happiness you have brought me! Evelyn, you have saved both him and me; do you know it is the greatest relief to me that he is going quite away, since he is not miserable any more. I think it was only a foolish passing fancy I had for him after all."

Evelyn could hardly help laughing at the sudden dissolving into thin air of Lilith's ephemeral romance. She kissed her, smiling as she said—

"That is all well; then I think you and I had better both go to bed and get what sleep we can before the late breakfast."

"Yes; but, Evelyn, you must give me one promise," said Lilith, anxiously detaining her as she would have left the room. "You must pledge your word to me that you will never, come what may, let my brother know anything of all that has happened to-night. He must not learn, as long as I live, that I met Arthur Moore this evening, and that you went out to save him!"

"I do not see how I can give you such a promise," said Evelyn gravely. "Edgar will soon be my husband, and it is not right that I should have any secrets from him."

Lilith started from her seat with a wild look of alarm.

"Oh, Evelyn, you cannot mean it, you could not be so cruel! Do you know what would happen if you told Edgar that I disobeyed him? He would send me quite away and never let me live with him and you when you are married, as he said he would. Be merciful to me, Evelyn; say that you will keep the events of this night a dead secret from my brother and from everyone else. Do not plunge me in despair!"

At last Evelyn yielded, unwillingly indeed, for she felt that she ought not to hide anything from her future husband; but there was this amount of weakness in her otherwise fine character, that she never could refuse a petition from anyone who appealed to her kindness.

"Well, Lilith, I give you my promise," she said. "Do not distress yourself any more."

Lilith's delight and gratitude were a sufficient reward for her concession, and Evelyn left her believing that all their troubles were over.

Therein she was greatly mistaken.

In the afternoon of the same day a servant came to tell her that a person who gave his name as John Webb wished to speak to her. She happened to be alone in the drawing-room with Lady Wrexham, as Lord Romanes had taken Lilith to visit some friends at a distance. Evelyn concluded it must be one of her *fiancé's* tenants come to ask her intercession for the lowering of his rent, for she had received many such requests since her engagement had been announced. She told the butler to show the man into the library, and went there without any misgiving to hear what he wanted. She entered and closed the door, and there standing upright with a sinister smile on his face was the man who had looked at her so closely as she left the station that morning. He was about the last person she would have wished to see, but she simply asked him with a quiet dignity of manner what his object was in requesting an interview with her.

"I have come to make a little arrangement with you, madam, which I think you will find to be very necessary."

"What do you mean?" she said haughtily.

"I saw you part with that gentleman at the station this morning, and I also saw you walking through the wood with him late last night till you reached a cottage where you remained many hours. I was on the watch, I tell you plainly, madam; and, when daylight began to appear, I saw you come out of the door with the gentleman, and I followed you till you parted from him." Then he paused and looked her boldly in the face.

For a moment Evelyn was so overwhelmed with amazement and indignation that she could hardly speak, though her crimson cheek and flashing eyes showed the passionate anger that possessed her. At last with quivering lips she said:

"How do you dare to speak to me with so much insolence? Leave the room at once, or I will ring for the servants to turn you out."

"I do not think it will serve your turn to quarrel with me, madam," said the man composedly; "you had better hear what more I have to say. I do not suppose you wish Lord Romanes to learn all I know about you. If you choose to make it worth my while with a good sum paid down, I'll promise to keep silence on this affair to everyone; but if you do not pay up handsomely at once, I shall go straight to Lord Romanes and tell him everything."

"So that is your object," said Evelyn with ineffable scorn; "black-

mail! You see what you do not understand, and think to extort money from me as the price of your silence. I defy you utterly; you can go and tell Lord Romanes whatever you please; but you shall not stay in my presence another moment." She rang the bell sharply as she spoke.

"Very well, madam," said the man insolently; "if you will not pay up, his lordship will; he'll consider my information worth a good deal, I take it."

Her summons had brought the butler to the door very quickly, and as he came in, Evelyn said to him quietly, "Show this man out; see that he leaves the house at once."

The well-trained servant obeyed without a word, and Webb found himself outside the back entrance to the hall without having been allowed to speak at all to his conductor.

However, he was not to be baffled; he was a man of bad character who had once been under-gamekeeper in Lord Romanes' service, from which he was discharged for various misdemeanors, and since then he had not attempted to get his living in an honest manner, but tried to gain money in any nefarious way that presented itself. He had seen Lord Romanes go out, and he took up a post near the gate to wait his return. It was late in the afternoon before he appeared, and he then came alone, as Lilith was to remain for a fortnight with the friends to whom he had taken her. As his carriage stopped till the gate was opened, Webb approached the open window and asked very respectfully if he might be allowed an interview with his lordship.

"What is it you want?" said his former master quickly.

"I have something very important to tell your lordship; it is quite necessary you should hear it as soon as possible, my lord."

"Well, I cannot attend to you to-day; come to-morrow morning at eleven o'clock."

"I will, my lord," said the man bowing respectfully, and the carriage rolled on. Lord Romanes had been absent from his Evelyn for some hours, and he was anxious to have a pleasant stroll with her in the grounds before it became too dark. He found she was in her own room, and sent her maid to ask if she would walk with him. She came flying downstairs at his call, bright and smiling as usual, and met his fond welcome with special delight. They went out together, and as she looked up into his fine face and gladly noted the deep tenderness of the gaze he bent on her, she said to herself proudly that no hateful calumniator would have power to lower her in his estimation.

"I would trust him," she thought, "even if the whole world spoke against him; and he will trust me, surely, whatever a low hateful spy may say to him."

The evening passed very happily, and next morning at breakfast, as Lady Wrexham never appeared till noon, and Lilith was absent, Lord Romanes asked Evelyn to preside at the table as the future mistress of his house.

An hour or two later, Evelyn Clive was sitting alone in a little boudoir which had been specially set apart for her use, when the door opened and Lord Romanes came in. He closed it almost violently and walked towards her as she sat on the sofa, and stood looking down upon her with a countenance full of passionate agitation. She saw at once that Webb had fully carried out his threat, and her heart beat quickly even while she said to herself—well aware that she could give him no explanation, bound as she was by her promise to Lilith—"he will trust me—he must; he cannot really doubt me!"

"Evelyn," said her lover, in a voice hoarse with strong emotion, "a statement has been made to me respecting you which I must believe is an infamous lie, and I only need one word from you to make the villain who has dared to concoct it pay dearly for his hideous calumny. I should have done so already, but he begged me to ask the truth from yourself; he said you could not deny it."

"What did he tell you about me?" said Evelyn, her voice trembling slightly.

"I can hardly bear to utter the words before you, but it must be done that the refutation may be complete. He said that he saw you last night walking in the wood with a gentleman, that you went with him to a lonely house, and only took leave of him at daybreak near the station yesterday morning. Quick, Evelyn; tell me that it is a vile detestable slander, and I shall be ready to break the neck of the scoundrel who invented it!"

"I cannot," said Evelyn—"it is true."

"True?" Lord Romanes fell back a few steps, overcome with dismay.

"Yes," said Evelyn, rising hastily and coming towards him; "but, Edgar, there is a perfectly innocent explanation of it all. I am certain you would not blame me yourself, if you knew the whole truth."

"Give me the explanation, then, at once," he said fiercely; "but I doubt if anything you could say would excuse your having laid yourself open to such an accusation."

Then, with all her sinking heart, did Evelyn bitterly repent her imprudent promise to Lilith. Yet would she not be false to her plighted word whereby she had promised Lilith that she would never—happen what might—let Lord Romanes, or anyone else, know the history of the previous night. She saw clearly enough that, in any case, either Lilith or herself must suffer by the intense anger which the affair, under any aspect of it, would arouse in her lover, and her generous spirit was content that the suffering should fall on her rather than on his weak, timid sister.

"Why do you not speak, Evelyn?" said Lord Romanes, beating his foot impatiently on the ground. "Even a moment of this suspense is unendurable."

She lifted her clear eyes fearlessly to his face as she said:

"I was only thinking, with deep regret, that a solemn promise given to another person makes it impossible for me to enter into any explanation."

"Do you mean to say that you refuse me an explanation of what on the face of it is nothing less than a glaring scandal?"

"I have no choice," she said, wincing painfully at his words, "I cannot break my promise; but, Edgar," she added, in the tenderest tones of her musical voice, "surely you can trust me? I tell you truly and distinctly that, however strange appearances may be, what I did last night was absolutely innocent and right. It grieves me bitterly that I cannot explain it to you, but I think you ought to consider me worthy of your trust."

"I could have trusted you this morning with my life as well as my honour, but now—— Evelyn, do you mean that you will never tell me the truth as to this infamous affair?"

"I fear—never," she answered; "but when I gave the promise of secrecy, I did not doubt that you could trust me."

He turned abruptly from her and paced the room for a few minutes in violent agitation, then he came back and stood before her with a stern expression of countenance.

"Evelyn," he said, coldly, "there can be no palliation or half measures in this affair. You must understand at once, that if you persist in your suspicious silence, there can be but one result. I have to consider the honour of my race, and the lady who becomes my wife must never have been touched by a breath of slander."

At these words, spoken with the utmost determination, her heart seemed to stand still, and a chill as of death passed through her frame, for she had loved this man devotedly.

"You mean that we must part?" she said faintly.

"I see no alternative," he answered. "If you will not or cannot empower me to expose this horrible charge as a most infamous falsehood, that low scoundrel will spread it far and wide, and it will be known that I can give it no denial."

She did not speak, and after a moment's silence he went on, more gently:

"You have been very dear to me, Evelyn, and I looked forward to a life of happiness in your companionship. It will cost me much to part with you, but the pain of a love betrayed may be healed in time. The taint of a disgrace attaching to my race will go on with all its infamy to generations yet unborn."

"Disgrace! infamy! Lord Romanes, do you venture to connect such words with me?" Evelyn had been deadly pale, but now the hot colour flashed into her face and she confronted him with pride as great as his own gleaming from her cloudless eyes.

"Have I not ample reason?" he answered, sternly. "Is the charge that has been made against you anything less than disgraceful and infamous? And you admit its truth and you give me no explanation."

Evelyn looked steadily at him. She saw that he was prepared to believe the worst of the woman he had deemed worthy to be his wife —he did not trust her. She had been mistaken in him—he had not the noble nature she had attributed to him. He was narrow-minded, selfish, vain; nor could his feeling for herself have been what she imagined; it was a poor affection indeed which could not under all circumstances rest in unshaken faith. As she understood in that moment what he really was the love she had felt for him under a different impression of his character seemed to die away within her heart; there was no faltering in her voice as she said:

"It is enough, Lord Romanes; you are right; we must part at once and finally. You have refused to accept my assurance of absolute innocence; you do not trust me. Even if you were to learn the truth all must be at an end between us; you have doubted me. I will never now be your wife; I shall leave your house this day."

She turned from him and walked to the door. He did not speak, and as she opened it and crossed the threshold she looked round for one moment as with a mute farewell. He had flung himself down on the sofa and was sitting with folded arms and his head bent on his breast; then she closed the door and passed out of his presence.

Evelyn gave herself no time for thought, her one desire was to quit Romanes Hall as speedily as might be. She sent for her maid and told her to pack up everything that belonged to her, and make ready for an immediate departure. Then she examined the railway time-table, and found that the first train by which she could travel to London did not start till four o'clock; it left her more hours than she cared to spend under that roof, but there was no help for it. She went to find Lady Wrexham in the drawing-room, told her she was unexpectedly obliged to leave Romanes Hall that day, and begged her to order the carriage to take her to the station in good time. It was a principle with this lady never to trouble herself about other people's affairs, so she calmly acquiesced in Miss Clive's wish, and only expressed some mild surprise at her sudden resolution. Evelyn went back to her room and there wrote a letter to Lilith to tell her that the engagement between herself and her brother was entirely broken off. She was too high-minded to let the young girl know the cause of the rupture, but in case it should come to her knowledge she urged her not to distress herself if she ever found that Edgar had a mistaken impression as to her adventures during that strange night, as nothing could make any difference on their complete separation, circumstances having arisen which would make it impossible for her ever to be his wife. When this was done there was still some time to be passed before Evelyn could start, and being very anxious to avoid meeting Lord Romanes, she went out to walk in a retired part of the grounds, where a very startling sight suddenly met her eyes.

John Webb had been very summarily dismissed by his former

master after he had carried out his iniquitous design. Lord Romanes had ordered him out of the room, telling him he would see him again on the morrow, and if he found that his hideous tale was false he would know how to deal with him; if not—— He did not finish his sentence, but pointed sternly to the door, and the man went out in considerable doubt as to whether the information given to Miss Clive's betrothed would prove as lucrative as he had expected. That being the case he thought he had better try to make his market out of it elsewhere. Webb had friends among the servants at the Hall, and as it is well known that these inhabitants of the lower regions are always perfectly acquainted with the affairs of their employers, Webb was therefore quite aware that there was one individual among the habitual guests to whom Miss Clive's good reputation would be of the highest value. The result of this conviction on his part was soon made strikingly manifest to the lady whom it most concerned.

Evelyn was strolling along a side path at some distance from the house when she suddenly came upon a group whose warlike position filled her with amazement. Standing upright with his fists clenched, and his expression full of a burning indignation decidedly dangerous to his foe, was Lyon Everard; while prone on the grass at his feet John Webb lay doubled up, as the result of a well-aimed knock-down blow.

He was apparently not seriously damaged, for he began to wriggle away from the vicinity of Mr. Everard's feet, as if somewhat apprehensive that they might be employed for his further punishment.

Evelyn's sudden appearance on the scene was perceived at once by both men, and Everard quickly issued an imperative command to the prostrate combatant. "Get up, you scoundrel, and take yourself off. Do not let that lady's eyes light on your villainous carcase, or I'll send you rolling down the bank in double quick time."

The man needed no further admonition; he gathered himself up and limped away, rubbing his head ruefully where it had come in contact with Mr. Everard's clenched hand.

"What has happened—what does it all mean?" exclaimed Evelyn anxiously, as Webb, whom she quickly recognised, disappeared among the trees.

"Nothing to alarm you in the least," said Everard, looking at her tenderly; "it is a very simple affair; that villain made a most iniquitous attempt at blackmail upon me and I knocked him down that is all."

Evelyn looked up with her clear candid eyes into Everard's face.

"Has he been speaking to you of me?" she asked.

"He has been speaking of you," replied Everard calmly.

"Did he tell you what he saw that night?"

"Yes."

"And you believed him?" Evelyn's voice trembled slightly.

"It sounded like the truth," replied Everard, "though it is very

likely the fellow is an infinite liar; but of course, that it should be true could not affect anyone who knows you as I do: if you did what he describes, it was because you knew it to be good and right that you should do it; being what you are, you can do nothing which is not good and right."

Evelyn gave him her hand in silence, she was too much moved to speak; there rose before her mind in most vivid colouring the contrast between the two men who had both professed to love and honour her; they had each been tried in precisely the same manner, and now had the one fallen to the very dust in her estimation, while the other had risen to purest heights of faithfulness and trust.

Everard had heard that Miss Clive was suddenly leaving Romanes Hall, and he guessed what had happened; as he held her hand for a few moments in his strong grasp, he registered a vow that he would, when the time was ripe, use every effort possible for mortal man in order to induce her to walk with him, hand in hand, through all the difficult paths of this world, even to their lives' end. That vow he kept, and saw it fulfilled with perfect success some two years later.

When that time came Lord Romanes had learned the truth; his sister Lilith, always delicate, had succumbed to rapid consumption, and on her death-bed, when earthly terrors could touch her no more, she told her brother the history of her own disobedience and Evelyn's heroic conduct, for she had always suspected that the unfortunate affair had been the cause of their separation.

Then Lord Romanes did justice to his lost love and bewailed his own fatal mistake. He was still unmarried and fain would have recalled his Evelyn had it been possible; but it was too late, she was already the happy and honoured wife of Lyon Everard. Her untrusting lover did all that he could—he wrote to tell her he knew the whole truth at last and begged her forgiveness.

Evelyn was sitting beside her husband when this missive arrived; she put it into Everard's hand with a smile.

"There is the solution of the mystery at last," she said; "now you will know what I did that night."

"It has been a blessed mystery for me," he answered, "as it was the means of my gaining you to be the priceless treasure of my life, I am not much concerned to read this letter Evelyn, its contents cannot make the smallest difference between you and me."

"But I wish you to read it," she replied. "It has always been a source of pain to me that I should keep so much as the shadow of a secret from you, and now that dear Lilith has herself set me free from my promise of concealment, I can feel that the last cloud is swept away from my past."

LETTERS FROM SOUTH AFRICA.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "In the Lotus Land," etc., etc.

Bloemfontein. *May*, 1893.

CARE AMICE,—In my last letter I briefly described to you our descent into the mines. It felt very much like going down nto a maelström; the same tendency to vertigo; the same feeling of being swallowed up in a pit of everlasting destruction. But we came out of it all very happily; and our disguises discarded, once more knew each other and felt civilised. The next experience certainly nearly deprived us of reason and hearing; we had never even imagined such a roar and tempest of noise as we found in the stamping sheds; but even from this we finally escaped without damage. The experience was worth the risk. A great deal in the visit was extremely interesting. It was all as one huge, complicated bit of machinery, admirably doing its duty; one part dependent upon another; the whole working harmoniously. Nothing else enabled us to realise how great is the work going on in this new world; how it is likely to grow and prosper and extend its influence. Great things are often the result of small beginnings, but here from the very first they began with great things; the elements of success were always apparent. As has been said of more than one man of genius, so it might be said of Johannesburg, that it awoke one morning and found itself famous.

Perhaps it is wanting in the slight halo of romance that surrounds the diamond mines of Kimberley. There is something specially interesting and attractive about precious stones. They are certainly the most beautiful objects in the mineral world; to one who loves the charm and harmony of colour, a joy for ever. What can equal a matchless diamond? In a small space you carry about you all the hues of the rainbow. Light a taper, and immediately a thousand rays flash forth, and delight you with a feeling of power and possession—they are all yours, and neither grow old nor fade away. Five hundred years hence that matchless stone may grace the hand of your fair and youthful descendant and flash out as brilliantly and freshly as it does to-day: a bond of sympathy between her on earth and you in Spirit-land, to which a mesmeric virtue may be attached linking past and present together, mortal with immortal: for in precious stones there always seems to us something vital and mysterious. We have on our finger a small diamond worn for half a century by one who was to us life's sunshine, whose loss makes us realise, a

DOWN IN A GOLD MINE.

we never realised before, the infinite meaning of those words: "That death in life, the days that are no more." As we write it flashes forth a thousand rays in the sunlight, that change from beauty to beauty, and seem ever a reflection of her pure life and spirit; bringing down to us, very near to us, the vision of a gentle face that in its soft loveliness was ever radiant with almost a divine expression.

So the diamond mines of Kimberley in virtue of their gems possess a certain halo of romance denied to the gold mines of Johannesburg. Yet gold comes next in value and interest, and may be carved and moulded and graven into beauty. Even in Scripture, gold and precious stones are frequently classed together; and wherever Solomon, with all his resources, placed the one in decoration, the other was never far off. Johannesburg will probably last the longer; remain the arena of an immense industry deep and wide when the glory of Kimberley will have passed away; and the fiftieth generation from to-day will point to deserted cavities and abandoned ruins, and say: "Here in days gone by when a primitive race inhabited the earth, who could neither fly in the air, nor probe the centre of the globe, nor communicate their ideas without language, nor hold converse with the stars; here that primitive people dug for little stones that reflected the sunlight and rainbow, whilst we have both at our command, and draw fire and light from the one, and surround ourselves at will with a prismatic atmosphere that makes our common objects dreams of harmony and colouring."

So they will talk in that fiftieth generation, and in the meantime we have to be content with our day and possibilities.

Whether the gold mines of Johannesburg will exist two thousand years hence or not, it is certain that they exist to-day, and are still far from the "right ascension" of their prosperity. The mines now working have not come to their richness, and many mines have still to be opened up. For some years before the actual discovery of gold—as far back as 1854—its existence was suspected and reported. But the worthy Boers, not very enterprising and ambitious, thought much more of stocking a farm and persuading a few acres to yield fair crops than of seeking for hidden treasures. Years after, an engineer, specially sent, worked and sought for gold in very sight of the Witwatersrand beds, and finding no results abandoned the spot with fortune in his grasp. The very next foot of earth might have opened up all the concealed wealth. It is often so.

But the discovery was to come and did come. The first mine was not called after Solomon, though it might well have been. Perhaps the finders would not place themselves in comparison with the richest as well as the wisest of men; and perhaps they showed their wisdom. They did the next best thing they could; they called it Sheba, probably after the great Queen; and wealth beyond the

possessions of the Queen of Sheba flowed in to certain fortunate speculators. A fever of course ensued; thousands of adventurers flocked to the scene; £1 shares went up to £90; other mines and companies were started; until at last there came a crash and a reaction which the South African market feels to this day, but from which it is now recovering, to establish itself on a firmer, healthier basis. Wisely managed, prosperity will not only be great but lasting.

Leaving all this El Dorado atmosphere behind us, one fine morning we started for Pretoria, where we had arranged to spend a day. As we were to return the same day, we had to take an early train. The distance was only thirty-two miles, yet it was a three hours' journey; the train started at seven.

Johannesburg was still slumbering, when in the grey morning, we left the hotel. The town had not yet awakened to the fever of business and speculation. A sleepy night-porter had roused us at an unearthly hour, and then returned to his own slumbers. When we appeared upon the scene we had great difficulty in obtaining breakfast, though all had been arranged over-night. The want of system made everything a trouble and an effort. By dint of threats rendered awful by mysterious consequences prophesied—the unknown is always attractive—we managed to get a little energy into the two sleepy waiters who were supposed to be preparing us a sumptuous repast. We were thankful to receive bread and tea, and to escape just in time to catch our train.

The town-station is near the hotel, and the train steamed up from the further terminus, and took us "on board." 1st, 2nd, and 3rd class passengers seemed to seat themselves as they pleased, regardless of the fare they had paid; whilst the carriages were short American affairs with outside platforms, very hard and uncomfortable. A restless young man was our fellow-passenger, who presently beckoned in four other restless young men, certainly not in possession of 1st class tickets. All proceeded to bring out truly terrible looking cigars, for which they had probably paid a very modest coin. At seven in the morning, and after the lightest of breakfasts, this would have upset the balance of a saint, let alone an erring mortal. We mildly protested that it was not a smoking carriage, and the rights of a freeborn Englishman must be respected, even by an inhabitant of the New Republic. The five youths arrested their cigars on the way to their mouths, as wide open as their eyes from astonishment, and looked rebellious. Seeing, however, that we were quite in earnest, they decided that discretion was the better part of valour. Four of them rose in a body and silently filed out and transferred themselves to a distant compartment. The fifth youth, who had first entered, determined not to yield to the enemy, and remained, but did not venture to light up. In the course of half-an-hour he had restlessly occupied every empty seat in the carriage, and then finished up his performance by smashing a window. This let in a great deal more

air than was agreeable at that early hour, for the morning was still crisp and sharp. But it did more: it let in the guard also, who charged the restless youth so heavy a price for a new window, that he paid it under protest.

"And now show me your ticket," said the guard, as he stowed away the price of the window. And a third class ticket was produced.

"I've a great mind to fine you the extra fare," remarked the worthy and excellent conductor. "You've no business in here at all, but if you did come you should have behaved yourself. However, I think you've been sufficiently punished for to-day, so I'll let you off. But don't do it again."

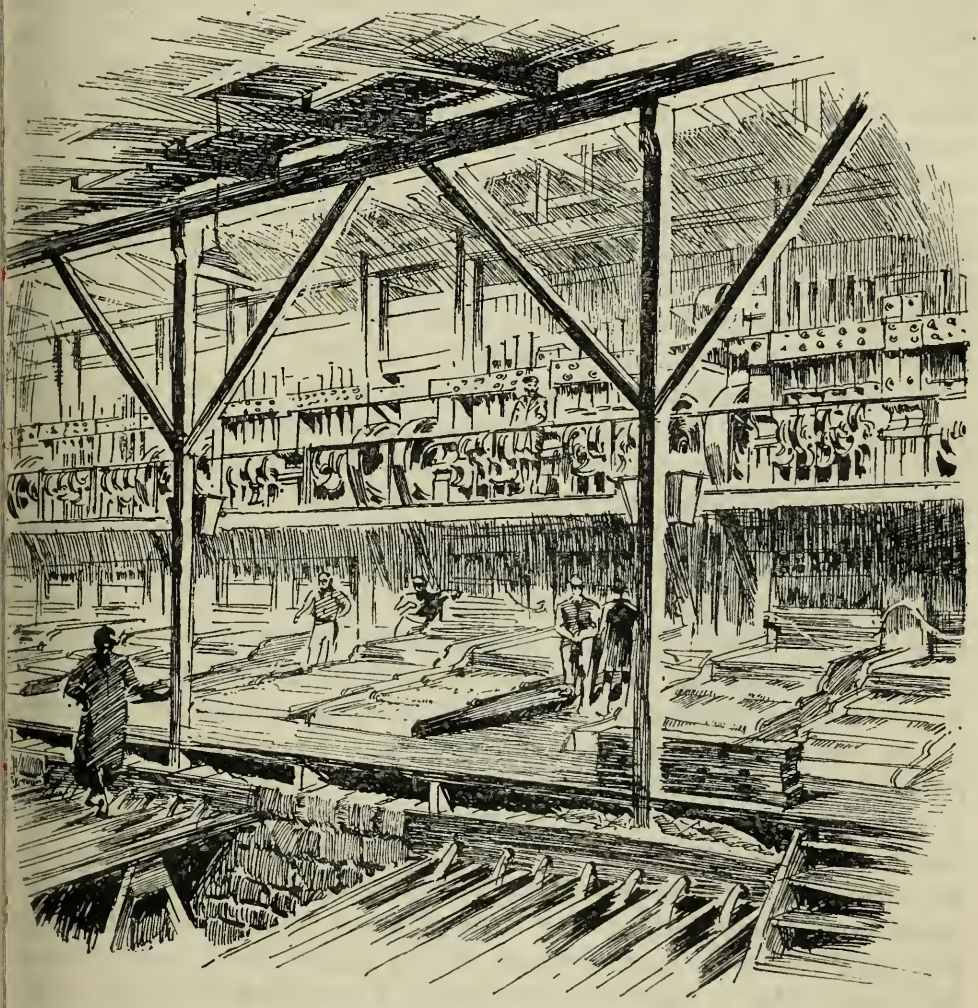
And the youth, feeling he had decidedly had the worst of it, departed and joined the smokers at the further end of the train. All looked decent enough, in spite of their behaviour, and were so well-dressed that we asked the guard for an explanation of the mystery. Well-dressed young men ought to have known better.

"Why, sir," he replied, "there's no great mystery in the matter. It's a holiday in Pretoria to-day—you'll find everything shut up as close as Sunday—and these boys are Johannesburg clerks—not one of 'em over twenty—going to Pretoria for a day's outing. Naturally they're dressed up in their best for the occasion. I'm afraid one of them will be a good many shillings short of his reckoning," he grimly added; "but it's not the first time he has given me a little trouble. If there's any mischief going on, he's sure to be in it. He's a restless young monkey, and I doubt not, in such a place as Johannesburg, will come to grief one of these fine days. A good many lads have gone the same way. Ah! I call it a bad influence. There's always a small gold fever going on, and they catch it, and it finishes up a good few of them."

In the weakness of our nature this account made us feel sorry for the restless youth; and if we could have quietly slipped the price of the window into his pocket, we should have done so, wrapped up in a short homily entreating him to try to keep a fairly steady head upon his shoulders in the time to come. When we reached Pretoria the four youths filed away, looking deadly pale from the effects of bad tobacco. We did not pity them; there are times when compassion is only wasted upon mortals. As our restless youth marched after them, he looked as though he and sorrow would never sit together; jolly as a sand-boy, and as careless. From the state of his complexion he evidently had not smoked, and the consequences of the smashed window were already forgotten. "Ah, well!" we sighed. "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may." The whisper was lost upon him, but no doubt he is unconsciously following the advice to the best of his opportunities.

The journey from Johannesburg to Pretoria had in it nothing very remarkable in the way of interest. For the most part the scenery

was wild and desolate. Wide stretches of sandy plain alternated with districts that were cultivated, and yielded abundant grain and fruits, and pasture-land. Cattle grazed, not upon a thousand hills, but in as many plains. The air was light and sparkling, the sky serenely blue, the whole influence exhilarating. Delightful for the eye to follow all those green or sandy undulations which seemed never-ending, and made one feel as if the world were boundless as space itself. Beautiful the waving trees, the trailing creepers, the wonderful flowers we



A Gold Stamp Battery.

ccasionally passed on the way. The train slowly glided through its 2 miles, and then with hills rising all around, we steamed up o our destination.

We found the station was some distance outside the town, and ie long white road leading to it was hot and sandy; very desert-ooking for the chief town of the Transvaal. The sharp, crisp iorning had given place to a hot day. The sun glowed; pre-ently we should have midsummer upon us again. A quarter of

an hour's walk through sand and dust brought us to the town itself, and very evident was the beauty of its situation. An amphitheatre of hills surrounded it, whose distant outlines cut sharply against the sky. We soon found it was to be a more closed day if possible than Sunday. Every shop was shut, the streets were deserted. This was disappointing, as we had only the day to consecrate to Pretoria, and wished to see it in its ordinary dress. The occasion was the re-election of the President, who on the following day, "dressed in his brief authority," would proceed with drums and trumpets to the House of Parliament, the Upper and Lower Volkraad, and go through the usual ceremony. Much preparation was being made in some of the streets. Triumphal arches, all evergreens and gilding, made one feel as if a Royal Wedding or Coming of Age or Wonderful Jubilee were in the air. Flowers strewed the paths, the débris of those used for decoration. The election or re-election of the President does not happen every year, and the people of Pretoria make the most of their few red-letter days. We regretted we had not happened upon the next day for our visit, but once more we must quote that time waits for no man.

Thus it chanced that we saw Pretoria in its holiday dress only. Perhaps it had its advantages. We gathered the impression that it was a city of leisure, where the days pass in a continual round of amiable hospitalities, garden parties, flower shows and picnics; where youth and beauty, like Titania and her Court, dance upon the green; where life passes in a refined atmosphere of gilded enjoyment, and the cares of existence are unknown. Of course it is not quite all this, but the feverish and speculative atmosphere of Johannesburg is here only a tradition. The influences are legal, ecclesiastical, political. These are the leading outlines of Pretoria as opposed to Johannesburg; the one atmosphere intellectual, the other mining and commercial. In Pretoria, you might never suspect the existence of a Stock Exchange and Money Market, of underground burrowings where human ants throw up gold and precious stones. Here the Bishop has his Palace and Cathedral; the former after the bungalow custom of South Africa; the latter a small unpretending building, long and low and narrow, which within looked very much like an iron church, but nevertheless possessed a certain simple dignity and repose and subdued tone that was pleasing.

Our first impression of Pretoria—and perhaps our last—was that it gave one the idea of an overgrown village, a "sweet Auburn of the Plain," although the town has extremely handsome and imposing buildings—more so perhaps than any other town in South Africa; but these are merely its heart, and might be spanned with the hand; you may draw a cordon round them. They exist in the one square—market square—in the centre of which rises the Dutch Reformed Church, a fairly large and conspicuous building. This, we thought, is the Cathedral, and here we shall find an ecclesiastical

influence; but we were mistaken. The cathedral lies in the upper and more distant part of the town, hiding its diminished head in quiet thoroughfares. Pretoria belongs to the Boers, and the Lutheran religion is the most evident. Beyond the church are the market buildings, erected at a great cost; much larger and more pretentious than Pretoria yet needs, but the wise inhabitants have built for the time to come. There are days and seasons when the square is crowded with carts and cattle; a picturesque and necessary but not agreeable element. You have to thread your way to within the portals of the church in the face of glaring eyes and formidable horns; there is much sale and bartering going on, and the air echoes with Dutch and English syllables.

The principal buildings cluster round the Square, but not too closely: there is breathing-space and a dignified expanse. Parliament House—which also contains other offices—is perhaps the handsomest building in South Africa, modern and imposing, but ungraced by any of the true beauties of architecture. No doubt the Pretorians are proud of it, and perhaps justly so, for it is evidence of progress and industry. Four or five years ago, Parliament House consisted of a small thatched building, humble, but more picturesque than this commanding structure, with its gilded female figure crowning the tower. It has long been a vexed question whether this effigy represents a Biblical character or the Queen of England; and the two parties are divided into Reverentials and Profanities: just as there used to be Jacobites and Royalists, Whigs and Tories, Bourbons and Orleanists. The Houses of York and Lancaster wore red and white roses as badges, but we did not hear what were the distinguishing ensigns of the Reverentials and Profanities of Pretoria.

The town existed long before Johannesburg, for it dates back to the year 1855: not a very ancient pedigree, but antediluvian compared with its younger rival. Undoubtedly it owes and will owe much to our modern El Dorado in common with the whole of South Africa, and the glory of the one is reflected upon the other. But Pretoria is lower down in the world by some two thousand feet, and one felt a sensible difference in the atmosphere. This was not fancy, but reality, and the inhabitants bear witness to it. Unfortunately Pretoria was wrongly placed. It should have been built on the slope of one of the hills; it lies in a hollow. An amphitheatre of hills surround it, and in spite of its being more than four thousand feet above the level of the sea, it is warm and relaxing. The people look pale and delicate; all but the old inhabitants, who have survived bad drainage and bad water, and enervating airs, and whom nothing will kill. The situation is most picturesque, but, like Dr. Syntax, you may pay too great a price even for the beautiful. Things are improving, but much remains to be done. Many die of pneumonia and consumption. The climate is dry in winter, but in summer much rain falls, and much of the ground is marshy, giving rise to fever.

Yet Pretoria is undoubtedly charming. It is considered, and we thought it, the prettiest inland place in South Africa. Long straight thoroughfares radiate from the square towards the distant hills. The whole place seemed to us to resemble a large and beautiful garden. Rose-hedges lined the roads, behind which were the picturesque bungalow houses. Most conspicuous feature of all were the large and graceful willows and ashes. These grew everywhere, by far the finest we had ever seen. In fact we had never imagined such willows. The streets were lined with trees. But they were not streets; they were charming roads with low houses dotted about here and there to give them life and interest. Flowers seemed to abound. The eucalyptus we frequently saw, and many an oak. The whole place looked like a perpetual flower-show; an Arcadian village embowered in green. Over all was the clear, lovely blue sky; surrounding all, that far-off amphitheatre of hills with their undulating outlines. If the climate of Pretoria is mild and relaxing, and not very healthy, its soil is wonderfully fertile. The Apies River takes its source near here, a small tributary of the great Crocodile River, and its banks are beautiful with overhanging trees that court their reflection, and looking downwards yet see all the wonders of sky and stars. In much Pretoria is greatly favoured, but the pale, often listless look of the people bore witness to the worm i' the bud; the one drawback; the *if* and the *but* that invariably enter into the brightest picture, the happiest lot. A perfect condition of things would never do for mortals; human nature must have a grievance; those who live under cloudless skies and perpetual sunshine, sigh for a return to winter and the grey influences of life.

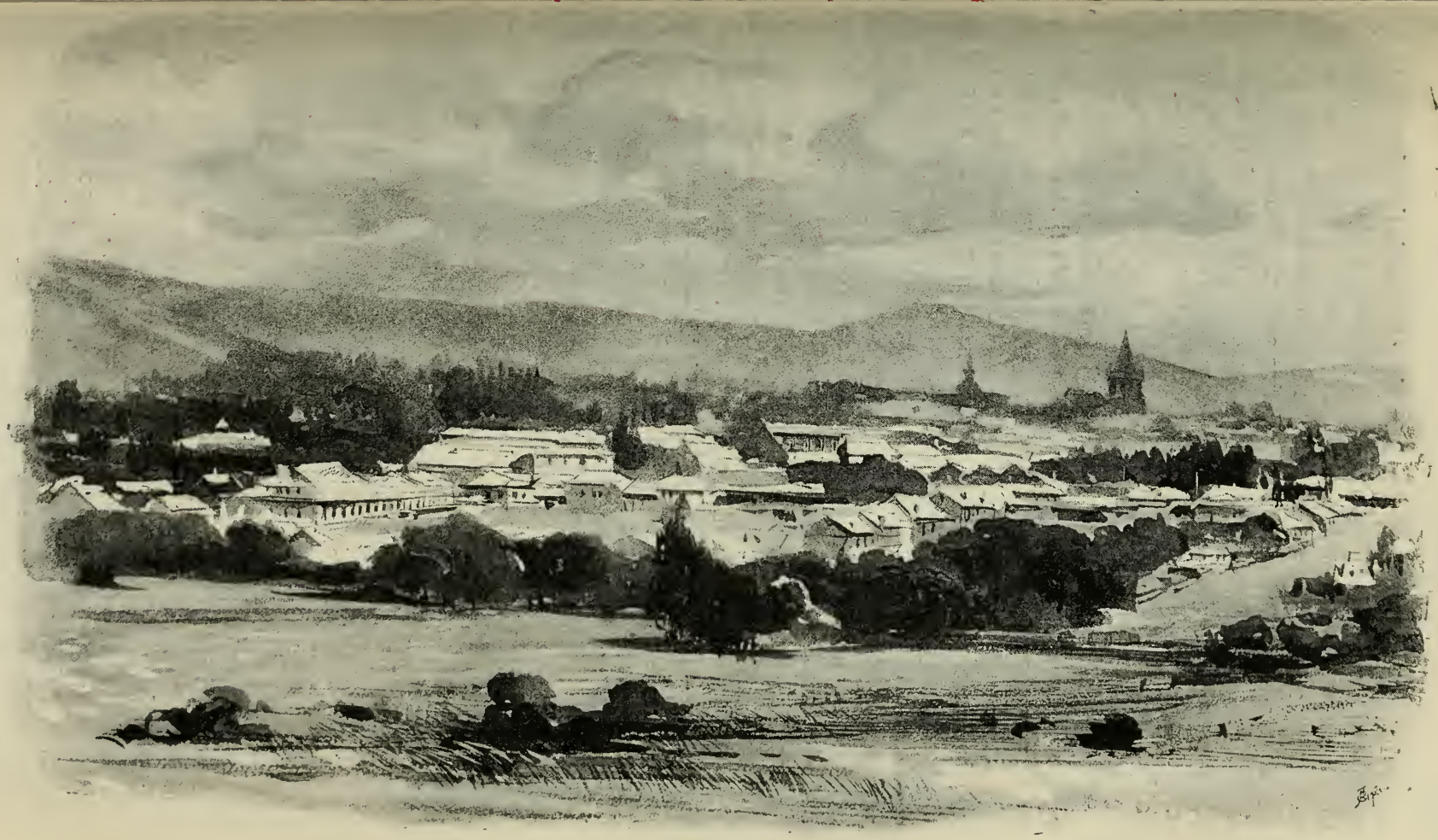
Under the circumstances of this close day, we felt a little stranded in Pretoria. We had brought introductions, but every one was away; the place was out of joint. The Bishop would have been a host in himself, but he was still absent. No day could have proved more ill-suited to our purpose, and it was another example of the malignant crossness of events. Even the morrow would have been an improvement, for we should then have come in for all its festal gaieties: the sounding brass and tinkling cymbal—for what is pleasure without noise? The great display of flags and banners; completed floral arches; the Presidential procession; a polite invitation to the Presidential Banquet, where the feast of reason and the flow of soul would be assisted by generous draughts of champagne. Later in the evening a ball, graced by the President's lovely daughters. For surely he had daughters, and if so, they must be lovely. And they would have smiled upon us; and perhaps one of them would have been a Cinderella with a fairy godmother, and the glass slipper being found in our pocket, we should have been constituted her Prince for ever after. Imagination was boundless in its airy castles and possibilities. But it was not the next day, and what can be more

Avenue of Blue Gum Trees, Pretoria.

depressing than the day before a festival, unless it be the day after? Who has not passed through deserted ball-rooms and banquetting-halls when beauty and laughter and light and glory have fled, and felt creeping over him the shadow that is on all things—death in life?

But we had a *pied-à-terre*. We were kindly and hospitably received at the Club, though like every other house and place in Pretoria that day, it was nearly deserted. It was well situated and well managed, and its resources were at our disposal. The Club, on that occasion, was, to us, Pretoria's redeeming point. There was nothing to be done, nothing to be seen, no one was at home anywhere; we felt like those who lead a forlorn hope. Even Government House was inaccessible. We thought we should like to see the interior of the Senate House, where the affairs of the "Great Republic" are discussed and settled: the Great Republic of the Transvaal, which is going to make a famous name for itself and cast its treasures broadcast upon the world: we wished to carry away some impression of an intellectual interior which had cost its enterprising people nearly £200,000, and had been furnished at the cost of another £30,000 —vast sums for this brave and bold little capital in the midst of the desert. But the hall porter was absent. That dignified official had probably gone to Johannesburg for a day's holiday, a sort of quid-pro-quo arrangement; the towns had exchanged inhabitants. We rang at the front entrance, high and wide: a sonorous bell echoed and re-echoed through marble corridors, until we thought it would rouse the much gilded and discussed statue at the top of the tower, who whether saint or mortal would come down and demand a reason for this disturbance of her solitary reign. But she came not; and we rang again; and the porter came not either. This was the great front entrance, of imposing presence and magnificent iron gates which allowed you to see a vision of a splendid staircase beyond, up which passes with slow and solemn step and grave and reverent mien, all the intellectual rank and fashion and profound learning of this New Republic. Then we bethought us of the back entrance, thinking that perhaps a Page of the Back Stairs might have been overlooked in the general holiday, and was lingering out a solitary existence, voting holidays a mistake, and that life would be bearable but for its amusements. We went round, but with the same success. Nothing had been overlooked; no "Dougal Creatur'" had left open a kindly door for us; and if any page had been passed over he had sensibly taken French leave and departed.

But we gained a thorough idea of Pretoria dressed in its Sunday's best: Pretoria in holiday attire. We could at this moment draw out from memory a complete map of the place; the number of windows in every important building; all the highways and by-ways that run in straight lines and cross each other like the squares on a chess board. We remember the lovely weeping willows: the saules pleureurs as the French poetically call them: which threw a



PRETORIA.

somewhat sad atmosphere over Pretoria, as though the place were one huge and beautiful cemetery. We remember the bungalows with their trellis-work over which climbed luxuriant creepers; and a pale face standing at many a door with pathetic eyes that seemed to look out upon a world of sorrow and suffering and question why these things should be. Our first impression was wrong after all. Not here does life pass in mere gilded enjoyment; not here are the cares of life unknown. The little "City of Refuge" has still to be found. Probably the search will be lengthy in a world where man never is but always to be blest.

The day had its compensations. It was also surrounded by an agreeable sentiment of sadness; the melancholy that is just sufficient to be a luxury. For we had, in a sense, arrived at the end of our pilgrimage in South Africa. We had gone as far north as we should go; had reached our utmost distance from Cape Town. Pretoria was the limit of our experiences. After this it would be a sort of turning our faces homewards. Our visit to South Africa would begin to feel very much like a thing of the past, would fall into the category of days that are no more. The end of an exploring journey is always sad: it is another reminder that all things come to an end.

The hours seem to have passed quickly when—after a more refined repast than we had yet enjoyed in the Transvaal—it was time to bid farewell to the Union and wend our way towards the station. We crossed the Market Square, under the now lengthening shadows of the Dutch Church. The place was altogether deserted. Market-day carts and oxen had to be imagined—with the interior of the Government Buildings, which we left to our right as we passed into the long thoroughfare leading to departure. From her lofty pinnacle the contested image seemed to smile down a "Bon Voyage" upon us, though the Reverentials would look upon this as too worldly a benediction. Triumphal arches appeared in several directions, and after all it seemed that men are but children of a larger growth; each must be amused. We left it all behind us.

> "We pass right out from land to land;
> We have strange power of speech."

And strange at all times sounded the unknown tongue of the Boer under skies that felt so essentially *English*: for the English influence is altogether predominant. We passed from the region of shops and houses into the white, dusty, ascending road. Pretoria lay behind us in the glory of the lowering sun, bathed in a golden atmosphere. Outlines of buildings and spires stood out vividly against a clear sky, in which not a cloud or vapour was visible: one blue unbroken dome, sparkling in the lightness of rarefied air 4000 feet above sea level. The day had been intensely hot—the night would be cold. These violent contrasts, especially peculiar to Pretoria, form one of its dangers.

The station was quiet; few passengers were returning by this train. Holidays they thought should be long-drawn-out; and not a drawback but a charm was the getting home when light was breaking in the east. It was so much better to enjoy life to the full. Our noisy youths must especially have thought so, for they were delightfully conspicuous by their absence. Perhaps the railway journey with its interrupted cigars and smashed window had been voted a failure: restraint of all kinds is unwelcome to the disorganised mind: and they had decided to remain in Pretoria for the morrow's festivities, returning by coach on the following day. For a coach still runs between Johannesburg and Pretoria, and very delightful is the drive across country, through the light and sparkling air, under the blue unbroken dome.

As the train steamed away, we ourselves felt that time and events were dealing rather hardly with us. We should have liked to remain for the morrow's pageant and ceremony: the small pleasures of brass bands and triumphal arches, the more important assemblage in the Senate House; the brilliant ball with its thrilling Cinderella episode. But it could not be. Man often misses his fate for want of a day's opportunity. We passed away from Pretoria with all its unknown possibilities. The shades of night fell and shut out the landscape; it was ten o'clock when we steamed into Johannesburg.

A few minutes brought us to the hotel, where we hoped for rest and refreshment. But they were determined to charge us for what they would not supply. In the morning we had had no breakfast, and now they would give us no tea.

"Meals at certain hours," said the polite manager; "and if you cannot conform to those hours, you must go without them."

In vain we represented that the age of miracles was past and we could not be in two places at once; impossible to spend the day in Pretoria, and conform to the hours of the hotel. As travellers we must insist upon being supplied with something. At length we managed to obtain tea and a few dry biscuits, and for these small mercies had to be thankful; glad to escape presently to our rooms. For there was no comfortable sitting-room at the travellers' disposal: nothing but a small "parlour" a few feet square, where people smoked and drank, and where it was interesting to watch the faces of speculators with their intense expressions, as in deep undertones, comprehensible only to themselves, they discussed the merits of new and doubtful schemes, the probabilities of to-morrow. Occasionally we could see by sudden eagerness, by the fire of suppressed excitement, that one seemed to think he had "struck oil" in an unusually good idea, awaking golden visions of long-sought and long-expected wealth and grandeur. Most of these dreams are destined to failure, working a certain amount of evil and mischief; but the one lucky number in the lottery wins the prize; the thousandth chance turns up trumps; and so with the spirit of the gambler man goes on to his doom.

That night we especially noticed in the parlour, whilst waiting for our tea, two men who had drawn as far apart as was possible. As it happened no one else was in the room. They looked like the vulture and his prey; but probably were equally matched in cunning and experience and the chances of war. The one was talking, the other listening; quiet listening on the part of the one, intense eagerness combined with emphatic gestures on the part of the other. Conversation fell to a whisper when we entered. The face of the talker was singularly handsome, with refined, clear-cut features. He ought to have been in a different position, he must once have been a gentleman. There was the unmistakable air about him which never absolutely leaves a man born and bred in a cultured atmosphere. All was marred by the expression of the gambler; the man who, living by his wits, has gradually thrown honour and self-respect to the winds. Life has become an unequal race, and he has grown desperate and careless. No longer for him the proud boast: "Tout est perdu, fors l'honneur." It was a face to make the angels weep, with all its grand possibilities and indications lying in ruins. Still young, for he could not have been above thirty—but in expression, in experience, in lines of anguish and despair—perhaps of moral conflicts ending in failures: who can tell?—a century old.

His companion was of a very different stamp. A wide, pale, dissipated face; small eyes that yet glared unpleasantly through spectacles; a broad brow indicative of a certain power; a singularly flat head betraying an absence of all reverence; a disposition to be wary of. No gentleman he, in the present or in the past; no refinement of form or feature; no "caste" to lose; and probably no moral conflicts to render the conscience burdened and uneasy. Exactly the man to seize upon an idea and work it out if it could be done at all. But it was sad to see them together: one of the saddest sights we had met with in Johannesburg. Generally speaking the speculative element, and those who indulged in it, only drew forth one's contempt; the compassion in one's nature was not touched or needed. It is of no use wasting pity upon a stone, which cannot feel.

We met with many similar episodes and experiences in Johannesburg, though none quite so pathetic, none that called forth one's sorrow and regret quite so vividly. For we seldom saw in any human countenance the wreck of great possibilities. Generally speaking they were what they looked; had never drifted from great heights; water has a way of finding its own level; eagles do not degenerate into sparrows; in many natures *noblesse oblige* is their safeguard. Where great powers or possibilities end adversely there is always a subtle reason for it; a slight weakness of nature for which circumstances or temptations were too strong; a mind not perfectly balanced; a slight obliquity of moral vision which caused the finer boundary line separating absolute right from wrong to be lost—one of the most common and one of the most dangerous evils, because

the most unsuspected. This only makes the result the more sad, and it is of such cases as these that one can often say, "Savoir tout, c'est tout pardonner." All ruins are beautiful excepting the ruin of a great nature: and this was what we specially saw that night on our return from Pretoria. Perhaps the calmness of our day had disposed us to reflection, but it is certain that we went off to bed a little depressed by what we had seen. We longed to go up to the unknown and extend to him the right hand of brotherhood and say to him: "Forsake your thorns and briers, and turn to your fir-trees and myrtle-trees and all shall yet be well." But these opportunities—if

A Wagon Party in the Desert.

opportunities they are—generally pass as they arose; nothing is done; as a rule, nothing can be done. After all, we cannot set the world to rights.

Our last day in Johannesburg dawned. Before another sun had risen we should have left its conflicting atmospheres behind us. And one conclusion we had come to was that for an agreeable stay in this wonderful city, it is necessary to be quartered at a friend's house. There in the privacy of domestic life, you are fairly out of reach of the feverish element which runs through the place like an electric current. The hotels are uncomfortable, and moreover you are surrounded by the element we have described. But there is no fear

of your catching the fever; to a looker-on from the outside it carries its own antidote. Unhealthy and demoralising, you quickly come to the conclusion that "le jeu ne vaut pas la chandelle." "Faites vos jeux, messieurs," rings in your ears in vain. It is not a syren cry that tempts you.

That last day was perhaps our most pleasant in this second city in South Africa. We took as it were a review of the whole. A friend escorted us in his comfortable victoria through all the charming suburbs. Once more we admired all the wonderful evidences of industry. We walked through many a young plantation, amidst acres of cultivated fruit and flower-land. All the slopes and undulations stretching far and near were rich with promise. We had come back to our 6000 feet of elevation and the air had none of the enervating softness of Pretoria. But it was not such a little Garden of Eden, where things grow of their own accord, and thorns and briers keep out of sight. We cannot have it in all ways. Here, on the other hand, people looked strong and vigorous: the "hectic flush of health" was frequently visible; the genuine inhabitants, who had taken firm root, were happy and contented and prosperous. Their lines, they say, have fallen in pleasant places. It is so. True, they have to pay for it. Johannesburg is one of the dearest places in the world to live in: a drawback that will rectify itself by-and-by, though the time is not yet. In Pretoria a small four-roomed cottage will let for £6 a month: an eight-roomed cottage for £15. In Johannesburg it is even worse. Other things, meat excepted, are in proportion. But all this will find its level. Small wonder, when we remember that seven years ago nothing existed here but barren plains on which a few mud huts had been erected for the accommodation of "prospectors" and explorers. The town has grown too rapidly. It is in truth a city of gold that millions would not now purchase; that seven years ago would have changed hands for £10,000 or less, including a vast area of land. It has its drawbacks: sand-storms that are terrible; rapid changes of temperature that are dangerous and make the death-rate in summer somewhat high. But in time this, too, may find its antidote. The people are fond of sport. There is a flourishing turf club, and outside the town an admirable race-course. It has frequent meetings and summer and winter handicaps of £2,500. Cricket grounds, tennis courts, football fields abound; wholesome influences. The Wanderer's Club supports large orchestral bands, and concerts are often given, both in the open air and in the pavilion, which is the largest in South Africa. All this we saw, and wondered; and did homage to the unparalleled enterprise of Johannesburg. It has spared itself in nothing, and has accomplished marvels, though still in its infancy. Above all, surrounding all, we have the light and sparkling air and clear skies, and this alone would raise Johannesburg far above the level of ordinary towns.

Yet we were not sorry when our last day drew slowly on to evening.

Our *pied-à-terre* was uncomfortable; the human influences surrounding us were inharmonious; there was a want of rest and repose everywhere. When the last hour struck we felt we had seen everything; there was nothing to remain for; no regrets to leave behind.

Our destination was Bloemfontein in the Orange Free State. The train left at ten o'clock at night; the station was the more distant, lying outside the town. Darkness had long fallen when we left the hotel, and there was no "lingering sadness" in the farewell we gave it. A cab—one of the things Johannesburg does not yet excel in—whirled us rapidly down the street. Rashly, we also thought, for it was a darkness to be felt. Beyond the town we passed over waste ground, uneven as a troubled sea, with not a human sign or sound. The darkness and desolation made one feel as if the days of highwaymen had returned and we were being conveyed to some terrible doom. Presently we stopped, and there gradually loomed upon us the outlines of what looked like a long low shed: the station. Everything was in darkness; the solitary porter was taking his ease and calmly refused to have anything to do with our luggage. The cabman placed it on the ground, and after demanding double his fare, departed. We felt very much at sea. Presently the station-master appeared, and with his help not too willingly given, we managed to settle down at last. But it was the most curious experience, most independent set of railway officials, most unorthodox station we had ever seen or heard of.

We had a long journey before us, being due at Bloemfontein about two o'clock the following day. Fortunately we found a civil guard who reserved us a special compartment, and made up beds to the best of his power. Everything depends upon the guards, who can generally make or mar your comfort in travelling.

The train steamed away in the darkness. At this station there were very few passengers. Everything had passed so quietly and lazily and unofficially it seemed impossible that the train was actually starting on its long journey to the Cape. It might have been a local train going to Pretoria, and we almost expected to see the five youths enter and take possession. In a few minutes we stopped at the town station, and here the platform was more crowded with eager and excited passengers, rushing roughly to and fro. Thanks to our obliging guard we were left unmolested, and those who would have entered he piloted elsewhere. Once more we were off, and Johannesburg was a thing of the past.

Thanks to our guard, the night wore away comfortably, more or less unconsciously. Stoppages were few and far between. When dawn broke in the east we had passed out of the Republic of the Transvaal into the Orange Free State: so called, not because it is an unbroken garden of orange trees, where blushing maidens may adorn themselves with sweet-scented bridal blossoms: but from the great Orange River which divides it from Cape Colony. As the light increased we found we were travelling through flat,

unwooded, wide-sweeping plains. And this, for the most part, is the aspect and character of the State. Its plains are endless and almost woodless. It has few ranges of mountains, but rather abounds in small stony hills, whilst a small and solitary table mountain is not infrequently seen rising out of a vast plain, sharply outlined against the clear blue sky. Like much of South Africa, the capacities of the Orange Free State have in great part still to be developed. Capable of cultivation, only a very small portion has passed under the plough. But it is a great pastoral and grazing country, well stocked with cattle. Phyllis and Corydon in the form of shepherd and shepherdess are frequently seen, but they are modern and unromantic. It has numerous rivers, narrow and rapid, that with their deep, precipitous banks are some of the most picturesque in South Africa. Yet like birds of brilliant plumage who have no song, these beautiful rivers cannot be utilised, their frequent rapids forbidding navigation. But should the Orange Free State in the ages to come develop into a populous and prosperous country with large towns and enterprising inhabitants, a reserve force will be here for electrical uses and a thousand other purposes as yet undreamed of.

The State appears to be rich in almost everything. In gold and precious stones; in every species of mineral and of mineral oil, all waiting further development. Since the days of the diamond mines at Kimberley westward, and the Witwatersrand gold mines round about Johannesburg northward, the Orange Free State has expanded. The prosperity of those districts has rebounded upon it, and Griqualand and the Transvaal come to it for supplies. Its granaries give them corn, and its pastures provide them with heavier material. As the train passes leisurely through the country, the wide plains on either hand are well stocked with sheep and goats, with horses and mules, with every species of horned cattle. It also promises to become a great ostrich district, an industry hitherto unknown to it. The country lies high, 5000 feet above the level of the sea, and possesses the blessing of health. It is cold in winter, but dry and bracing. Here invalids come, and grow comparatively strong, and may go on living in a world, that with all its disadvantages and crossness of events, few wish to leave. The relaxing airs and fever marshes of Pretoria are things almost unknown in the Orange Free State. On its wide plains grows the beautiful mimosa in rich abundance, and brushwood flourishes in its dry and sandy soil. In summer it is subject to long droughts, like most treeless countries. These sometimes burn and parch the ground, but the grateful rain surely comes in the end and the thirsty land quickly recovers. Very often a hot summer's day is succeeded by a violent and prolonged storm. The dark heavens are lighted up by vivid and constant flashes of lightning, which illumine the vast plains for a moment, and make the succeeding darkness intense and awful. The thunder rolls on unceasingly, most terrible

Post Office and Market Place, Bloemfontein.

and majestic of all sounds. England cannot realise the grandeur and magnificence of these storms on the South African plains : and above all others, the plains of the Orange Free State.

In the early morning we watched the light creeping over the earth, all the glorious colours of the changing sky. The sun sprang out of the east, a round red ball ; the mists rolled away, and all the mystery of night and darkness disappeared. Just about this time we stopped at Kronstad, where at that moment our dear Mrs. S, was reposing. We pleased our fancy with the thought that away on a gentle slope we gazed upon the roof of her charmingly secluded, out-of-the-world home. Not that it stood alone, like a lodge in a wilderness. The little town of Kronstad lay stretched before us : a small handful of houses, apparently, surrounded by gardens and orchards. It looked very picturesque. We remembered how we were to have stayed here for a few days, and had been promised familiar visits to native huts and kraals, and regretted the impossible ; it could not be. All we saw of the huts and kraals were hasty visions from the train. Just outside the station there seemed a small settlement, and we certainly did not fall in love with the copper-coloured women, whilst the naked children running about were only to be admired as in a delightful state for the chastisement we twice saw administered whilst the train waited. The district was once called Reimland, from the number of wild animals, *wildebeesten* and *blesbokken*, that used to roam over plains and prairies, giving good work to the few enterprising sportsmen who went out in days gone by. They have all now disappeared, and tame and less interesting cattle have taken their place.

The situation of the town was charming. It really consists of far more than the handful of houses we saw, for it is the seat of the magistracy for the district, has several hotels, and all the usual public institutions. Surrounding the town for a great distance we noticed large tracts of bush, and beautiful thorn trees. The town itself lies on the right bank of the Valsch River, near to where the Bloemsprint empties itself into it with a sound of many waters. Kronstad has much to make it a pleasant and attractive place to live in ; but when all is said and done, every one of these distant towns means that to a certain degree one must be content to make the best of things. It is a colonial life and experience ; a mild form of "roughing it in the bush."

We breakfasted at the station, and after our long night journey, felt like giants refreshed. Very different, this, from Charlestown. It is right even in small things to give honour where it is due, and therefore impossible not to record this signal exception to the railway refreshment rooms in South Africa. This means very much on a long journey, at six in the morning : as we realised when the train steamed off again after half an hour's leisurely rest. During that time there had been a general "suspension of hostilities." Everyone seemed off duty. Guard and engine drivers indulged in strolls upon

the platform and long conversations. Natives came up and mingled with the passengers, and one felt how very much, in their case, distance lent enchantment to the view. The station officials held levees. There was abundance of time for breakfast; and for once we were glad that here at least they have learned the art of making haste slowly.

We steamed away from pleasant Kronstad and continued our journey. The train passed through endless stretches of flat country. Now and then we encountered a rushing river. Occasionally a table mountain varied the monotony of the plain. At rare intervals we stopped at a small wayside station, where little was visible excepting the railway shed and a few natives. Huts and kraals alone bore testimony to human life. There seemed an immense amount of solitude and desolation, not without great charm. The hours wore on, until at length, long after midday, the train slowly entered a large station and the picturesque syllables of BLOEMFONTEIN sounded in our willing ears.

AUTUMN.

THE month is over when I saw thy face
For the first time:
The ash and lime
Have lost their bloom, and autumn in its place
Hath given a richer foliage to the tree;
There is a change—and how is it with thee?

The days are past when wood and zephyr breath'd
To both one tale.
Of what avail
The wither'd garlands spring so lightly wreath'd?
Idly the dead leaves from our path we cast—
So be it with the memories of the past.

Yet—if like nature—chang'd but still the same,
We meet again:
If not in vain
The dream I dreamt—then all my heart can frame
Of fond remembrance shall be ever shed
Over the time that's past—the month that's dead.

C. E. MEETKERKE.

A BUSINESS IDYLL.

HOW very abominable men are, when they fall in love! They seem to lose all sense of right and wrong. They become utterly unscrupulous, and even habitually truthful men will develop a tendency to prevaricate, when there is a woman in the case. If you want to know how bad a man is, you should find out how he got his wife to accept him.

The firm of Phelps and Doolan, American and general merchants, is well known in the City. They do a big business, and are looked upon as smart people. Ten years ago the firm was John Phelps and Company, and John Phelps was sole partner. When his son Dick grew old enough he came into the business, and soon afterwards his father retired, the strain and worry being too much for his failing health. Doolan did not join the firm until three years later, and thus Dick was left to manage the business alone.

For so young a man, he was remarkably shrewd and clear-headed he seldom made mistakes; he never missed an opportunity; and he never lost his temper—even on mail days. Consequently the business expanded under his care like a pear in the sun.

He was no recluse, however, wrapped up in his work, and never giving a thought to other things. He went into society a good deal, and had more invitations than he could accept. For he belonged to that rare and almost extinct species known in the marriage market as "the plum." Was he not a bachelor of seven-and-twenty, with a large income, no particularly vicious tastes, and, beyond all, a house in Sloane Street?

"So different, you know, from those horrid men who live in chambers," as Lady Contour remarked. "One never knows *what* they do there; but when a man has a house and four servants, he *must* be respectable."

This argument was irrefutable, and the chase went on with renewed vigour. But Dick was wary, and not to be caught with the grain society usually lays out for birds of rich plumage.

He dined with Mrs. Hope, but was obviously bored when asked to turn over music for Miss Hope in the back drawing-room. He danced at Lady Velaston's, but absolutely refused to sit out two dances running with the daughter of the house, in a quiet corner of the conservatory.

And it was not that he was averse to marriage. On the contrary, it was distinctly affirmed that he had been heard to say how dull his house was with nobody but himself in it, and how he wished he had some children to make the place lively.

And so time went on, and mothers with daughters began to despair, and Dick began to laugh at love, and say he should never marry.

And let it be here remarked that when a man gets to this state, he is as good as engaged.

It was a lovely morning in early June, and Sloane Street looked as only Sloane Street *can* look, with the fresh green of Cadogan Gardens, and over all a haze which the sun was not yet strong enough to dispel.

Dick left home with the intention of walking to Charing Cross. He expected a man from America, and wanted to call at the Grand Hotel to see if he had arrived.

The clerk in the inquiry office was not sure. There was a gentleman of that name, and he would find out if he was the one.

Dick was meanwhile turned loose in the hall. He looked at the clock, and the newspaper stall, and the post-box, and thought what a lot of people it must take to keep the place going, and wondered if there were anybody staying there whom he knew, and in fact endeavoured to destroy five minutes of his life with the least possible difficulty. Suddenly he looked up, and saw a beautiful sight. It was a girl—of course.

Not an ordinary girl by any means. It is a merciful provision of nature that the majority of English girls are (there is no denying the fact) plain ; and thus the British voter can go about his business with calm spirit, and give his whole attention to the increase of national prosperity in relation to the individual.

This girl would have upset any amount of the most stolid of Her Majesty's subjects.

Just imagine—a girl about twenty, with a proper figure, dark grey eyes, long, dark lashes, a slightly drooping mouth, a complexion beyond the ken of a Londoner ; crisp brown-gold hair : and—rarest and most important item—beautiful hands and feet. It is not to be supposed that Dick took in all this at once. One cannot understand Wagner in a moment, and beauty is a more subtle thing than Wagner.

Just then the boy returned to say that the man was not there, and when Dick turned round again, the girl had vanished.

He was already late for the City, and could not afford to waste any more time, so he hailed a cab and drove off. But the vision remained. Even when opening his letters, it kept coming back with terrible persistency, and refused to be put aside.

"Who is she? What a fool I was not to ask. Can I decently go back again? I would give anything to find out about her."

These thoughts recurred again and again, and at last, in sheer desperation, he took up the *Times*, and endeavoured to fix his mind on "Railway and other companies." Phelps and Co. had agents in most parts of the world, but their chief trade was with New York, where the firm of Pixey Brothers looked after their interests.

These people were in the habit of drawing bills and issuing letters of credit on the London house, and when doing so it was the custom for two of the partners to sign jointly for the firm.

Dick was still engaged in reading the *Times* when he was interrupted by the entrance of one of his clerks.

"Well," said Dick, "what do you want?"

"This draft of Pixey Brothers has been presented for payment, but it has only one signature on it, instead of two. Shall we pay it? I thought I had better ask you."

"Let me see, 'Miss Margaret North, twenty pounds.' Oh, yes, it's such a small amount. Pay it. Wait a moment though—who presents it?"

"A young lady, Miss North."

"American?"

"I don't think so."

"Show her in."

Dick was restless and disinclined to work, so he thought a little feminine society would do him good, and the draft was a sufficient excuse for seeing the lady. A moment later the door opened to admit—the girl he had seen in the Grand Hotel. He actually blushed, and his usual *sang-froid* deserted him in the most cowardly manner.

At last, after what seemed to him an hour (it was really about fifteen seconds), he stammered out:

"Er—er—Miss—er—North?"

"Yes, that is my name. I hope there is nothing wrong with the cheque?"

"Oh! yes, yes. Please sit down, I will see about it."

She was as cool and self-possessed as he was the reverse, and she looked so awfully neat in her blue serge gown and big hat, while he felt sure that his tie was crooked, and grew painfully conscious that his boots turned up at the toes.

She was a revelation to him. It was not only that she was pretty, and all that, but there was a *something* about her—an innate grace—which he had never discovered in anyone before, and he felt that she was very necessary to his future happiness. In fact he fell in love with her.

He wheeled a chair up to the window for her, and then crossed the room to his table, where he ensconced himself behind the huge roll-top, and tried to think.

"What can I do? How can I possibly prevent her from going away? I won't lose this second chance. What *can* I do? I must find a way! Ah! It's frightfully mean, but I'll do it. And besides, it's all for her ultimate good."

Men always seem to think that when they marry it is a good thing for the girl. In nine cases out of ten it is a far better thing for the man.

Dick got up, and going into the outer office, told the porter that he could see no one, and was not to be disturbed on any account. Then he went back. Miss North was sitting by the window. He had quite recovered his self-possession, and, going slowly towards her, he began :

"About this draft, you know; the signature is irregular, and I am afraid I cannot possibly pay it."

"Oh! But it must be all right. My father got it for me in New York, and it is all the money I have."

She was standing up now, and Dick could see the trouble in her eyes, and wondered if she was going to cry.

"Cannot you telegraph about it?" she exclaimed.

"Yes, I could do that. Do you mind waiting? It would take some time."

"Oh! I can wait, or come back again if you like.

"Oh, no! Please wait. I'll see to it at once."

Dick had made up his mind to play a bold game. If he lost, it would probably lead to a row with Pixey Brothers; but if he won—ah! if he won——

He knew a good many people in New York, among others a broker on Wall Street, and to him he sent a telegram, asking him to wire the New York price of Union Pacific Railroad Shares. He had not the slightest intention of wiring to Pixey or paying the draft, and this was the best device he could think of, to make Miss North imagine that he had done as she asked. She was leaning back in her chair, looking rather miserable, and he went over and began to talk. But she was cold and reserved, and he could get little more than monosyllables from her, so he returned to his work. His eyes kept wandering in her direction, and it was in vain that he tried to write a letter.

At last one o'clock came, and he began to feel inclined for lunch. He generally lunched in the office, and he wondered if she would be offended if he asked her to lunch with him.

"I—er—I generally lunch in the office," he began.

"Please don't let me interrupt you. I will go away," she broke in, rising.

"Don't do that. I was going to ask if you would be kind enough to help me."

"Thank you, no!" she said, colouring slightly.

"But you must be hungry. Can't I persuade you?"

"Thank you. I am not in the habit of accepting hospitality from people I don't know." This with freezing politeness.

Most men would have been thoroughly crushed by this, but Dick, except when off his guard, had boldness enough for anything. He merely walked out of the room, and told the porter to get lunch for two, as good as possible, and a bottle of champagne.

It was not long coming, and the porter was soon busy laying the

table—for two, as Miss North noticed with indignation. "He thinks I am going to lunch with him, but I won't; no, not if he went down on his knees and asked me. Odious man! I wish he would pay me my money, and then I could be as rude to him as I liked."

When luncheon was ready and the porter had withdrawn, Dick said:

"Will you come to luncheon? It is ready."

"I think I told you I did not want any lunch."

"Oh! Very well. I'm sorry."

Dick sat down at his desk, and began to write, and the luncheon remained untouched. There was dead silence, broken only by the scratching of his pen. Miss North glanced first at the lunch and then at Dick, and began to feel uncomfortable. He didn't look so odious after all; and besides, she was hungry.

Five minutes passed, and at last she said, rather piteously—

"Aren't you going to eat your luncheon? It will be cold."

"Not without you," hardly looking up from his work.

More silence. Then—

"If you won't, I suppose I must."

Most ungrammatical sentence, but Dick wanted no other, and they were soon seated opposite each other at the table. The porter had done his duty. There were oysters, and a roast chicken with green peas, and a cherry tart with cream, besides grapes and biscuits and all those things that women like.

Miss North seemed rather surprised.

"How luxurious you are," she said; "do you always lunch like this?"

"Oh, yes!" with a laugh. "It's part of the business."

She was shy and cold at first, but afterwards she began to talk, and they were soon good friends. It is curious how in England sociability and eating are so united. Is it so in other countries?

Miss North had never been to England before. She had come alone, as her father could not spare the time to accompany her, and she was stopping a day in London, before going on to Chippenham, where she had relations.

"How beautiful England seems after New York," she exclaimed. "I do so wish we lived over here; but my father won't—or can't. He says he can't, but I believe it's won't."

"Perhaps you will live here after all."

"No chance of that, I am afraid. I would give anything to do so."

"Anything?"

"Well, you know what I mean."

"Yes, I know what you mean," rather sadly.

The conversation lapsed, and they sat silent for a few moments, until they were interrupted by the entrance of a clerk with a telegram —*the* telegram.

Dick walked to the window and read it.

"Union Pacific $39\frac{5}{8}$ buyers."

"Humph! Hope she won't ask to see it," he thought. "It will be a frightful thing for me if anything goes wrong now."

"Here is the answer to my telegram, Miss North," he began. "I am really very sorry, but I cannot pay you the money."

"Not pay? But—but what shall I do? That is all the money I have got, and——"

She looked very lovely, standing there with the tears in her eyes, and it required all Dick's self-control to keep him from blurting out the truth. There was a moment's pause before she again spoke.

"Thank you very much for the trouble you have taken. Will you give me the cheque? I must arrange something else."

Dick now felt it was time to give in, and said:

"One has to be very careful in business matters, Miss North, but I see you are in trouble. If you will permit me to help you, I shall be pleased to offer any assistance in my power."

She flushed at this and was silent for a minute. Dick thought she was offended. At last she spoke.

"I don't know why you are so kind to me. As I told you, I came to London yesterday alone, from New York, and I am staying at the Grand Hotel. Beyond a little American silver, I have no money at all, as my father thought it wiser to give me a cheque which I could get cashed in London; and now you say it is useless I don't know what to do. I am going to Chippenham, to some aunts of mine, and if I can only reach them, they will give me whatever I want. Would you—would you——" Her colour was coming and going, and Dick thought she looked prettier than ever in her anxiety.

"Please don't be disturbed," he said gently. "If you will allow me to help you I shall be only too glad. I can't bear to see you in trouble."

"Thank you very much. I shall never forget your kindness. You have done me a greater service than I can ever hope to repay."

"Oh! don't! Will you leave me your address at Chippenham, that I may let you know when the cheque has been put right? Perhaps you will write it down. Thank you."

Dick gave her some money, and she said good-bye.

"Hope she won't tumble on the truth," he thought; "how scornful she would be. I expect she can be fairly nasty when she gets angry. Poor girl! How jolly she looked." Two days afterwards there came a letter from her, returning the money. Only a few lines, but it seemed a good deal to him. And then he sent her the twenty pounds. He did not wish to be arrested for fraud, and he knew that she would write to her father at once.

Dick was very badly hit, and for days and nights together he could do nothing but think of her. Things worried him, too, and

his temper got bad. It became an effort to talk to people, and whenever he danced with a girl, he could not help thinking how much nicer it would be if she was Margaret North. This went on for three weeks, and then he gave up fighting.

"It is not a bit of use. I must see her again. Anything is better than this, even if she refuse me. I will go and see her, come what may."

The next morning found him in the train, bound for Chippenham. He got there soon after one, and after lunching and leaving his bag at the hotel, set out to walk the three miles to the village where Miss North was staying.

It was a blazing hot day, and there was not a particle of shade on the dusty road, so Dick was not sorry when he reached his destination.

It was a two-storeyed cottage, covered with ivy, with a small verandah and a fair-sized garden at the side. Undoubtedly a lady's house, but very small. Miss North's aunts were evidently not rich. Dick rang the bell, and inquired for Miss North.

"In the garden, I think, sir," said the servant. "If you will come into the drawing-room I will tell her you are here."

"Oh! you needn't trouble. I will go and find her. Round here?"

"Yes, sir; on the lawn, I expect." Miss North was lying in the shade in a long deck-chair (a relic of her voyage) reading a novel. Male visitors, or indeed visitors of any kind, were few and far between at the cottage, and her attitude was more comfortable than conventional, as she lay with one shoe off, and her hat tilted over her eyes. The turf was soft, and Dick approached unnoticed until quite close to her.

"How do you do," he began.

"Oh! How you startled me! I didn't know anybody was there," flushing hotly as she sat up in the chair, and made a dive for the missing shoe. "I do so hate being taken by surprise," she added crossly.

"You don't seem very glad to see me."

"Were you vain enough to suppose that I should be?"

"Well—er—no."

"Very well then, why do you grumble?" Then thinking she had been unnecessarily rude, she went on more civilly: "I suppose you are down here on business. It is very good of you to trouble yourself to come and see us. My aunts will be pleased."

"I am not down here on business, and I did not come to see your aunts."

"Oh!" shortly.

"I wanted to ask you a question," he said slowly. "Quite a simple one, but it means a good deal to me. I am a very ordinary, plain sort of man, with nothing particular to recommend me, but I

don't think I could love you any more than I do, even if I were the cleverest man in England. I came to ask you to be my wife. Is there any chance—Margaret?" he added tenderly, as he bent over her.

There was a still, sweet, silence, broken only by the sound of kisses.

Let us turn away from the further contemplation of Nature's Great Picture, which was never intended for exhibition.

One day on board ship, as Dick and his wife were returning from America—they were married in New York—he confessed his enormities in regard to the cheque; but Margaret was merciful, as she ever is merciful to her husband's many short-comings.

However, now that he was married, it was thought advisable that he should have a partner to look after him, so the firm became Phelps and Doolan.

ERNEST DAVIES.

MY NURSE.

SHE has a happy, peaceful face,
  And yet within her pleasant eyes,
I often think that I can trace
Some touch of Life's deep mysteries—
  As one whom sorrow has made wise.

A summer shadow, fine and thin,
  Not writ for every passer-by,
And yet that makes her more akin
With all the heavy griefs that lie
  On suffering Humanity.

Perchance some trouble of her own,
  Outlived, or conquered long ago,
Or sorrow from another thrown,
Has given her face that tender glow
  Which makes all sick folk love her so.

She comes into some darkened room
  Like sunshine in the fresh Spring air,
And robs it straight of half its gloom;
While the poor prisoner tossing there
  Grows quiet 'neath her gentle care.

With every power fitly trained
She follows the physician's art,
Keeps whatsoe'er his skill has gained,
And brings to serve him, for her part,
Her patient loyalty of heart.

What balm lies in her helpful hands;
What comfort in her accents bright!
Without a word she understands,
She shrinks not from the sorriest sight,
Is never weary, day nor night.

In the dark hour before the dawn,
In the monotonous hopeless day,
What though her very soul is torn
At pains she cannot keep at bay,
She holds upon her steadfast way.

She fans the feeble flame of Life,
She fights for every struggling breath,
She closes tired eyes to the strife,
And is not terrified at Death,
Knowing what lies beyond—beneath.

She of herself is quite forgot;
In others' cares, in others' needs
She flings with generous zeal her lot,
And never sufferer vainly pleads
The alms of her unselfish deeds.

She is not beautiful, I think,
And yet 'tis hard to draw the line,
For souls like hers that form a link
Between things human and divine
Are apt, like Heaven's stars, to shine.

Men say that Love and Faith are dead,
They ask for signs yet will not see—
My nurse beside that pain-racked bed,
Were proof enough of God for me,
Who made such lovely lives to be!

CHRISTIAN BURKE.

THAT NIGHT AT PUKKAPORE.

By G. B. Stuart.

WHEN Gwenny Travers's photographs came out to the Station everyone was in love with them at once, and when, a year afterwards, it was announced that Miss Gwenny was really expected, and the Colonel went down to Bombay to meet her, there was great rejoicing at Pukkapore.

Every male thing, from the Brigadier to young Dubbs, rejoiced, on his own account partly, and also on that of Mrs. Travers, the Colonel's wife, whose eldest daughter Gwenny was.

Mrs. Travers was the mother and confidante of everybody; a year before she had been home on sick leave, and it was on her return that the photographs made their appearance, and began to be one of the recognised interests of the station. "Have you seen the Colonel's girl's photos?" "Which do you like best, the one in the riding-habit or the one with her hair down?" "Isn't that sailor-hat vignette awfully fetching?" People had hardly got over these comments and criticism before it was announced that Gwenny was really on her way out; and then, of course, out came the photographs again with renewed importance that one might decide, now that she was so near, what Miss Gwenny was actually like.

When the date for her sailing was fixed, Mrs. Travers began to fuss about fixing up her room. "She must have the pink room, Charles; it will want a lot of doing up, but I shall begin at once, and——"

"Not the pink room, my dear," said the Colonel, from behind his paper, "the little one beyond ours is more suitable."

"Indeed, no! that's much too small for any young lady, and I should like the dear child to have a pretty, nice cool room that she can walk about in. Why, at school, she had a tiny little cubicle like a cabin, and a girl thinks so much of her own room. I can't think why you've a prejudice against the pink room—it will want an entire turn-out, for the servants have crammed it with things like a go-down, but you wait till Rosina and I have got it into order, and you'll be quite astonished how pretty it will be."

"I'd rather she had the smaller one," persisted the Colonel, and though he did not give any reason his face wore a perturbed look, which was out of keeping with the trifling occasion of difference, but his wife had rustled away to take counsel of Rosina, the little Portuguese lady's-maid, and the pink room might be looked upon as a settled question.

By the time the Colonel started for Bombay the room was ready, and very pretty it was; the rather faded pink of the walls had been

renewed, there was a brass bedstead, and white aspinalled furniture, white curtains and pink sash-ribbons to tie them up: new matting, and a book-case, and a shelf for photographs running round like a dado. Mrs. Travers and Rosina even aspinalled the huge wooden cupboard built into the wall, and made a smart pattern of Christmas cards to outline the panels; then all the ladies came to look at their handiwork, and admire it, and talk about Gwenny's coming.

"Wasn't this where——" Mrs. Trent said, and then stopped; Mrs. Bogle, the doctor's wife, had trodden on her gown.

"Yes," Mrs. Travers hastened to explain, full of her own prowess, "this was where we used to keep all sorts of stores, and boxes and things; the room was much too good for that, only the Colonel filled it up with things the year I was at home. I had such work to clear it, but Rosina and I have worked wonders, don't you think?"

Mrs. Bogle assured her that the effect was enchanting; Mrs. Trent held her tongue and examined the curtains; and then they all went to tea.

Two days after, Gwenny arrived, and a week later everyone was agreed that neither the riding-habit nor the sailor-hat portrait was "in it" with the Miss Gwenny who sat smiling in her mother's drawing-room, making that always pleasant place a perfect paradise to the Brigadier, who was a disconsolate widower of eight months standing, and to young Dubbs, and to all the various grades, ranks and varieties, civil and military, who filled the wide interval between that zenith and nadir of Pukkapore male society.

The beauty of Gwenny Travers was that she smiled on all alike, and that is a very great and uncommon point of beauty, especially in an Indian military station: the Brigadier was a pompous old bore, Dubbs was a timid young ass, Mrs. Bogle was a good-natured gossip and Mrs. Trent a *mal à propos* tattler; but one and all received the same pleasant treatment—friendly, modest, sincere, from the Colonel's daughter, and the first weeks of her arrival sped merrily along with a continuous round of merrymaking, to welcome the young lady who had galvanised the dull little place into life. Then, as a natural consequence, came a whole crop of proposals from everybody, all directed at the selfsame lady. The Brigadier took to wearing primrose gloves without graduating towards Hope Reborn by any of the legitimate stages of half-mourning, and then as suddenly left for Kashmir: little Dubbs after galloping his red pony "Ructions" over from cantonments five days a week, on some excuse or other to the Colonel's house, turned his steed's head about, and was met gloomily cantering in the opposite direction, when everyone else was going to the tennis ground; it was the same with nearly everybody, and everybody felt a little low and reactionary in consequence, and applied for leave almost in a body. After that there was a general settling down, and Gwenny Travers and her mother began to taste the sweets of home life and companionship, the elder woman grew young again

in her daughter's society, and both the Colonel and she felt that the years that were past, the struggles and anxieties of their earlier married life were as nothing now that "the girl" had come home.

It was Major Danvers, the Colonel's right-hand man, who first discovered that Gwenny was not looking herself at all, in fact had altered very considerably in the couple of months she had been in India, a fact which her father and mother, in their increased happiness, had never observed. At first, he kept the matter to himself, and watched the girl closely, wondering if any of the love affairs which had been common property on the Station had really affected her, and sighed to think of certain long-deferred expectations at home, which kept him a poor man and a bachelor. Presently he made so bold as to ask Mrs. Travers if the heat were not very trying to Miss Gwenny? she had grown so pale and so quiet now that the first excitement of her arrival was over, and though she was as sweet and pleasant to everyone, there seemed something lacking in the spontaneity of her enjoyment, and Gwenny coming into the room at the moment, the suddenly awakened mother flew at her with a hundred questions of eager anxiety. Gwenny put them all aside, and Major Danvers got up to go, feeling horribly guilty at the storm he had raised; there was a look in the girl's eyes too, as she bade him good-bye, which haunted him; was she appealing to him? had anything frightened her? He strode off to his quarters feeling puzzled and vexed with himself—what a fool he had been to put his finger into a ladies' pie, and what a goose the Colonel's wife was not to take things more sensibly; he had only meant to give her a little hint, and she had flown into a fever and made him look like a fool before Gwenny; yet—yet—what on earth *was* wrong with Gwenny?

"That's where I find fault with Roger Danvers," grumbled Mrs. Travers to her husband. "He is a capital soldier and a good man, I know, but he's dreadfully *gauche*. Now poor dear Charlie Kettering would never have said such a thing—as if a mother hadn't the sharpest eyes of anybody in the world for her own daughter! Did you ever think, Colonel, what a couple Gwenny and poor Charlie would have made if he had lived? He used to call her his little wife years ago, before she went home to school. Ah, dear, dear, India takes the best of us!"

The Colonel's wife was a very charming woman, but she was not keenly observant, and it had never struck her that allusions to poor Charlie Kettering, who had died during the year she was at home, and whom the Colonel had nursed in his last illness, were specially distasteful to her husband.

The next time Gwenny met Roger Danvers at the tennis-ground, and could speak to him for a moment unobserved, she said: "Don't put ideas into mamma's head, Major Danvers. Indeed I'm all right, only a little tired sometimes."

"I was so sorry, Miss Gwenny, for the commotion that I raised—

I could have shot myself afterwards when I saw that I had frightened your mother and annoyed you; but, forgive me for repeating it, you are looking very different and—— Are you sure there is nothing the matter?"

"No-o, nothing; that is—— Oh, if you've noticed, it must be noticeable,"—and Gwenny's face grew suddenly pink and her eyes filled with tears. "It's the nights here, Major Danvers. I don't know what it is, but they are terrible, always the same kind of terror and the same figure——"

She stopped in confusion.

They had walked to the end of the tennis-ground, and were practically alone; even Mrs. Trent would not have been so tactless as to disturb them, and as they leant against the railing Danvers could feel the shudder that shook the girl's slight frame.

"Do you mean that you dream, and dream always of the same figure?" he asked in a low voice.

"I don't know if it is a dream, or if I am awake when the thought comes to me, but it is something horrible—in my room," Gwenny said in shaken, jerky tones. "I think I go to sleep all right, and it is later that it comes on. Oh, I can't tell anybody; let us go back to the others," and she turned to walk back, but Danvers saw that her face was ashy white now, and her eyes distended with real fear.

"One moment," he said, detaining her. "Can't you tell your mother?"

"I want to, but she took such pleasure in making that pretty room for me, and now, I can never enter it without the dreadful feeling coming over me, and it seems—oh, it seems as if I were going mad!"

"Nonsense, Miss Gwenny! you mustn't say such things, even in jest. You must tell your father, then."

The girl looked full at him as the tone of command struck her. She was a soldier's daughter, and answered to it at once.

"Papa? Do you think I could? He is always so busy, and I never thought of daring to trouble him; but I could more easily explain it to him than to mamma, I think."

"Then do it at once; promise me, Gwenny; to-night without fail," the young man said, almost fiercely, for they were nearing the others now, and Mrs. Bogle's *pince-nez* was fixed like a burning glass upon them. "Promise!"—and Gwenny promised in a quick whisper, for there is one thing a girl cannot resist in a man, and that is a sudden exhibition of masterfulness.

Like other powerful animals it is perhaps a good thing they do not know wherein their strength lies!

About ten o'clock that night, as Danvers was smoking and fancying he was reading in his quarters, Colonel Travers came in; the younger man guessed in a moment something of what had brought him, and jumped up nervously with the expectancy of an explanation in his face. "I want you to come up to the bungalow with me, Danvers,

I can tell you what about as we go, only look sharp," and a moment later the two men were striding quickly over the white moonlit road.

"My girl spoke to you this afternoon about something—something that troubled and disturbed her, and you told her to come to me. No, you did quite rightly"—as the Major would have explained his seeming interference—"quite rightly; it is myself I blame for my blindness till now. She came and told me this evening all about it, and now I want your help to see me through something that requires more than one man's nerve and evidence. That poor child tells me that every night since she has been here—since she has slept in the pink room, she has dreamt—she supposes it to be a dream—of a figure which stands beside her bed and urges her to come away, to follow it; in short——"

"A ghost?" Danvers asked; he was sorry for poor little Gwenny in this, to him, self-inflicted torture, but he did not believe in ghosts.

"As the figure turns away from her bedside she invariably sees its face—and it is the face of a hanged man, Danvers."

"Whew! Some one has told her the story!"

"I think not; even her mother doesn't know it. It happened, as you know, when my wife was in England, and I've taken the utmost care that the particulars of poor Kettering's death should never come to her ears—Rosina, the maid is new; the old story of Kettering being seen has quite died away. I was averse, it is true, to Gwenny having that room, but my wife had set her heart on it, and I thought it would make more stir to explain than to let it pass. And all these weeks that child has been suffering in silence! She says that after it has shown her its face it melts away, as it were, into the big corner cupboard. What do you say to that?"

"The cupboard where he hanged himself, sir?"

"The same."

"What do you mean to do, Colonel?"

"My wife has gone to bed with a headache. I told them to make me up the dressing-room bed, and I would sleep there, as I had some accounts to go through, and might be very late. I have just sent Gwenny to bed with a dose of bromide that will keep her fast and sound for the next nine hours. She was very brave and good about sleeping alone in the room that she so fears and dislikes, but I promised her that this should be the last night in it, and that I would watch her and keep her safe. Here we are"—softly tiptoeing across the verandah, and letting himself in at one of the drawing-room windows—"I am going to open Gwenny's door there across the passage and shall sit and watch—you can remain here, just within call; smoke if you like, but don't drop off to sleep if you can help it; and if I see anything, I will call and you must come and bear witness."

Danvers hardly knew whether to laugh or not at the Colonel's simple ghost-trapping preparations, but after all they were sensible, matter-of-fact measures which would reassure Gwenny to-morrow

morning when she woke after a long, refreshing sleep, and learnt that the spell was broken and nothing supernatural had been seen.

About two hours later: "Danvers, come!" sounded in a hoarse whisper across the passage. Roger was at the Colonel's side in a second.

What was that? In the faint light of the bedroom, where a night-light burnt, aided by the rays from the passage lamp outside, the two watchers in the doorway could see a slight, shadowy figure on the further side of Gwenny's bed—a figure that was strangely familiar to them both, for though but its side and shoulder were to them, they recognised the bearing and shape of Charlie Kettering, the smartest young fellow the regiment had ever known. The thing stooped over Gwenny's pillow and held out its arms, but the girl lay perfectly still, her face hidden from them, and after what seemed an hour of horror, it lifted itself up erect and turned away. Then at the bottom of the bed it halted for a moment and slowly cast a lingering glance round the room, moving its head deliberately till it looked full in the faces of the two men not twenty feet away—it was the face of Charlie Kettering as the Colonel and the Major had last seen it eighteen months before, livid and terrible from his own suicidal act!

"Hold back—hold back! don't wake Gwenny! it might kill her," the Colonel entreated as Roger struggled hard to dash into the room; the figure was gone—gone even as they looked, melting away in the direction of the great corner cupboard which Mrs. Travers had decorated for her daughter. "Here, help me with this," and stepping across to Gwenny's bed he lifted one end of the little mattress on which the girl lay and signed to Danvers to take the other.

"We'll have her out of this!" And without another word they carried her across the passage to the Colonel's dressing-room, and laid her, just as she was, on the Colonel's bed. Her father looked at her anxiously. "No, I believe it's all right, the bromide hasn't failed me; whatever that devilish thing was, to-night she has not seen it. And to think that we have let her suffer this without finding out! Gad, man, why don't you speak? what do you think it was?"

"I don't think, Colonel—I know it was Charlie Kettering."

* * * * *

Next morning, Gwenny woke up very late for breakfast, and told her father that she had had a splendid night—not a dream nor a sound had disturbed her, as he might see for himself if it was he who had carried her bodily into the dressing-room. How in the world did he manage to lift her, and her mattress, like that, all alone? But the Colonel kept his own counsel, and sent Rosina to bring her her toilet necessaries, for he could not even bear that she should enter the pink room again. And in the course of the day, such was the Colonel's talent for organisation, Mrs. and Miss Travers found themselves packed off on a visit which had long been impending, but which was now decided on all in a hurry, as the drains of the

bungalow were found to require immediate attention. And when some weeks later they returned to Pukkapore, it was to find the Colonel established in brand new quarters, for the engineer had given his verdict that the old bungalow was quite too hopeless a job to spend money over.

The two ladies are immensely pleased with the change. Mrs. Travers because she likes her drawing-room, Gwenny because she likes her bedroom better; the girl has recovered her roses and her spirits, and has forgotten, or pretends she has forgotten, that afternoon's confidence to Roger Danvers on the tennis ground—perhaps this is only because the Major is "Sir Roger" now—the old uncle in England having considerately died "by last mail"—and seems a little strange at first. But Danvers is biding his time—the Colonel knows his secret—and the Colonel's lady looks more favourably on the Baronet than she did on the Major, and has not been heard to compare him unfavourably with poor Charlie Kettering for a long time. Whether Charlie Kettering lies quietly in his grave, or still haunts the dismantled bungalow, neither Danvers nor the Colonel cares to inquire. Luckily Pukkapore is a stirring little station, where the recollection of poor Charlie's sad end, during the fever which surely rendered him temporarily irresponsible, has been wiped out by many happier events.

TINTAGEL.

Grey watchful walls! Mark how uncounted days,
Fierce sun, wild rain and fitful spray of seas,
Keen winter frost, and roaming autumn breeze
Have marred this strength with manifold decays.
Fair upon crumbling stone green fern displays,
While ceasing not, the drowsy drove of bees
Rises and falls upon the heathy leas,
And high o'erhead the lark pours forth his lays!
Pleasant to rest here, in this dreamy place,
'Mid gleam of waters on a rocky coast,
Among the shadows of King Arthur's pile,
To seek and find some strength of old-world grace
For these new days of noise and strife and boast
From out the silence of the haunted isle!

T. S. Cunningham.

CLAUDE WALTON.

I.

A COUPLE of gas jets were burning in a long room. They had been turned low, and resembled little blue knots surrounded by yellow halos. The dim light showed two rows of stout posts separated from one another by a space of about six feet. The posts were set at regular intervals. Between each couple swung a hammock containing a man's recumbent figure. Deep regular breathings showed that sleep reigned. The sheets and rugs bore in all directions the broad arrow, which denoted that this was no charitable institution, but one of her Majesty's convict establishments. The room was divided down the centre by a wooden partition, and the second half was an exact facsimile of the first one. On either side of the partition paced an assistant warder with loaded rifle.

The gas-light shone impartially down on the two nearest hammocks. The faces of the men occupying them were strangely contrasted. The stamp of crime was written all over the face of the one as plainly as the broad arrow on his bed-clothes. He was a type of brute force. The low forehead and coarsely moulded features, indicated a man of herculean vigour. The most automatic of prison governors might have arrested his steps at the next hammock, with an inquiry as to what possible crime could have been committed by the occupant. The man had a large head, and prominent features brought into extra relief by the thinness of the cheeks. The skin was roughened by wind and weather, but no natural forces could obliterate the stamp of cultured refinement. The coarse hair slightly shaded the forehead; it had not been cropped lately, an unfailing sign that the duration of prison life was drawing to its close. Yet the crime for which he was paying the penalty was manslaughter.

Claude Walton had grown used to answer to the No. 22,000 during over five years of toil and servile submission. He had suffered the keenest mental torture. The gloomy and impotent fretting against the inevitable had at first brought him to the brink of madness. The self-made mental tread-mill was sapping his vitality. He must control himself, must resolve to think of injustice no more. He must submit for the sake of those dearer to him than life. With an iron strength of will he used his energy in forcing the tormenting reflections away from him, and bent his powers to accomplish submission without deterioration. To wear the yoke lightly so that in heart and mind he might still retain the dignity of a free man. His sentence was seven years; by good conduct he had gained a remission of time, and now in a month he would be free. Free to return to

his beautiful wife, who was too simple and innocent even to expect a change for the worse in him.

The sharp command to "turn out" in the morning seemed to No. 22,000 merely a pledge that another twenty-four hours had slipped away. As he splashed the cold water from the long trough over himself, and sat in the chapel under the rows of loaded rifles belonging to the guard, he began already to experience a foretaste of freedom. He looked upon these things as if they had already ceased to affect his life, and were merely matters for curiosity.

The manual labour of the convicts at Dartmoor was incessant but not severe. Operations were being carried on along a moorland road about a mile from the prison. The task set was the widening of this road. The gang were thus stretched out in a line, and the cordon of warders formed a lengthened oblong instead of a circle. The horizon formed a wide sweeping line, for the country was not hilly, yet the moor was rough, full of peaty holes and great boulders.

No. 22,000's companion was the man in the next hammock. He was a "lifer" as the badge on his sleeve denoted. He gave no trouble to the warders, and had attained the rank of a first class prisoner. No 22,000, had not toiled shoulder to shoulder with him for so long without learning to read the slightest signs upon his face. Though the expression was as dogged as usual that day there was a slight restlessness in the man's eyes which betrayed emotion. The stillness of the country was broken only by the soft cut of the spades into the turf, or the occasional clink as they struck against a stone.

"What's up with you?" asked 22,000 in an undertone. After a momentary pause, the faintest possible wink confirmed the suspicion that No. 11,000 meditated an escape. After five minutes' silent work he spoke. "It's fine and clear to-day."

In the course of raising a turf 22,000 gazed round the horizon and solved the meaning of the apparently trivial remark. A faint dimness showed that a fog was creeping up. A fog on Dartmoor is the convict's friend.

"Will you change spades, mate?" queried 11,000, at the next opportunity.

"No," replied 22,000. Though a prisoner himself, he knew that it would be a questionable proceeding to aid a wild beast to regain his liberty, especially as he avowedly escaped only that he might prey upon the human race again. Why the spade was wanted was a mystery.

"Hold your patter," commanded a warder in passing, and the reason of the request remained unknown.

After the dinner-hour, No. 22,000 became aware that the spade he handled was of a lighter make than his own; No. 11,000 had effected the exchange

"You must give back that spade," he announced when once more alongside his former companion.

"Not if I know it!" returned 11,000 cheerfully. "I've got it and mean to keep it; and if you make a noise about it, I'll do for you as well as for the others!"

No. 22,000 was uneasy. The discovery of the exchange by the guard was sufficient to cause a month's addition to his time.

The fog continued to thicken. The guard closed in. The two who had exchanged spades were at the outside extremity of the line. Another quarter of an hour passed, and the warders looked anxious. A preliminary stroke of the prison bell was heard, and the order, "Right about face," was given with promptitude. The two foremost prisoners sprang from the ranks at the same moment. With a bound like a lion No. 11,000 was beside a warder, and brought the spade down upon his head with a crashing blow. No. 22,000, perceiving the use to be made of his spade, had sprung forward to stop the murder. He only felt the coat of the fugitive slip through his fingers as he tried to grasp it. There was a flash, a report, a heavy fall, and two bodies lay on the ground. No. 22,000, and the warder.

Shot after shot echoed through the misty air. The prisoners, sullen and wondering, were hurried homeward.

After a very short chase, one of those in pursuit of the escaped convict returned. No. 11,000 had paid the penalty of his rashness, and was lying dead on the moor. He found several warders from the prison on the spot. The figure in uniform lay with ghastly face upturned to the grey sky. "Not much chance for him, poor chap!" remarked one of the men as they raised him.

"The convict's unconscious, too," said another, looking down at the drab coat stained with an ever-widening circle of red just under the right shoulder. "'Twasn't him as did for poor Jones."

"Serves him right though; he was helping t' other one to escape," answered the first.

* * * * *

The helplessness of intense weakness is hard enough to bear without further aggravation. But when 22,000 awoke to consciousness after severe illness, he found himself in a walled and barred-up bedstead with the chances of a severe punishment. He knew well the rigour with which the law visits a second offence, and his first committal for manslaughter would weigh the balance against him. It was *his* spade that had been used to strike the warder down. His spring to the rescue was misconstrued by all. He gave himself up to the expectation of another dreary round of prison years.

Contrary to expectation, however, the warder recovered, and after weeks of struggle for life was able to give his testimony. He was a young man, noted among the prisoners for his fairness, and he did not hesitate to support 22,000's statement.

"I saw the faces of the two distinctly," he said. "No 22,000 sprang to save me, the other meant death."

Censure still attached to No. 22,000 for the change of spades. Even

by his own statement he should have reported it when discovered. This entailed an additional sentence. When No. 22,000 was reported by the doctor fit to leave the hospital, all vitality seemed crushed out of him by suspense and delay; he moved and spoke like a man in a dream.

II.

Claude Walton had an ardent impulsive disposition; he had married hastily before he fully understood his wife's nature. She was very beautiful, and had a natural grace and elegance that commanded admiration wherever she went. But it was a certain pathetic child-likeness that had attracted Claude's fancy. He had seen a delicate, beautiful young girl, pure as a lily, and brought up like a nun, plunged into the gayest society. Her objections to Sunday picnics were scoffed at. He saw her condemn herself to a book of sermons for the afternoon, though with a quivering lip. Then he saw her growing hardened; no blush spring to her cheek at words which had brought the ready colour a week or two before. He had resolved to take her under his protection, and encourage her simplicity. Yet six years of married life had shown him that the narrowness of her notions accorded with the narrowness of her mind. She was unswerving in principle, but altogether incapable of true love or self-sacrifice. She had under all her childlikeness a vein of obstinacy. When he was committed for manslaughter, this obstinacy was directed against himself. He was an outcast, he had sinned, no amount of reasoning could drive that from her mind. She placed a barrier between them. He knew this, but yet he loved her, and looked forward with desperate longing to make up to her and his little girl all that he had brought upon them. He had left his wife, at all events, an affectionate, sensitive girl; when he came out of prison he returned to a gracious immovable woman. She never mentioned his prison career; she shrank even from his referring to it, but she was willing to accompany him wherever he went, and to share the hardships it brought upon them both.

To a small sea-side village on the coast of Cornwall they went, for the first year of re-union, and sometimes Claude could almost imagine the clinging tender child-wife had come back. He found staunch friends where he least expected them. One of his cousins, a Captain Montagu, whom he had always regarded as little more than a dandy, was the most loyal of all. Nothing but staying in the same village during his leave would satisfy him. He rendered Claude inestimable service by forcing him to take long walks, and make fishing expeditions. Claude Walton was the shadow of his former self. His great height added to his gaunt thinness. He had never recovered from the effects of that merciless bullet.

One day the sea was smooth as a mill pond, and a haze hung over the horizon. Claude and his wife stood by a railing that edged the summit of the cliff. It may have been a momentary forgetfulness of

all that had passed, a remembrance of the time when she thought him the noblest man on earth, that made Lilian slip her hand through her husband's arm.

They were quite alone. Before them—

> "A burning sea of burnished brass,
> The calm sea caught the noontide rays,
> And sunny slopes of golden grass,
> And wastes of weed flower seemed to blaze;
> Beyond the shining silver greys,
> Beyond the shades of denser bloom,
> The sky-line girt with glowing haze."

Claude responded gladly to the first spontaneous tender movement since his return from prison. He made an effort to explain what he had wished to make her understand during all the years of toil. "Lilian dear, I know you dislike my mentioning the hateful word prison, but there can be no true understanding between us till we have spoken on the subject. I want you to take my view of it. I am no more ashamed of having been in prison than I am of standing here. Punishment does not constitute disgrace. It was hard enough to bear without that. Don't move away, dear, they can never give me back the years I passed separated from you and Geraldine. But I resolved that the mark they made on my life should not be one of degradation. I am resolved to let it mar what remains to me as little as possible. You will help me, Lilian?"

"Oh yes, of course."

A less conscientious woman might have concealed her feelings. Lilian did not believe him innocent, and her rigid Puritanism shrank from a shadow of prevarication.

Claude saw it was hopeless, and stifled down his yearning for sympathy. He left his wife at a house where she wished to call, and went home. He was very weary. His highly-strung poetical nature had a large element of the woman in it. It was a relief to him to find Captain Montagu smoking in his sitting-room. A packet lay on the table come by the post; as Claude opened it he uttered a slight exclamation, and tossed the two or three photographs it contained over to Montagu. He knew what they were. Representations of woods, with waving fern and dense foliage. It was there that scene of bloodshed had been enacted.

"My solicitor came across them," explained Claude, "and sent them to me. They were taken at the time of the trial to assist the intelligent jury in arriving at a conclusion."

"Fools!"

Claude smiled wearily. "Your belief in me, Montagu, is one of the strangest facts I have ever come across."

"It seems to me incredible that anyone could believe you guilty."

"Yet it was impossible for the jury to give a verdict otherwise Colonel Helton and I were known to be bitter enemies. That da

when shooting we were alone in the wood. He exasperated me beyond endurance. I had a horrible temper then. I said 'You, blackguard, you would not dare to say that if I could challenge you.' He sprang at me to strike me across the face. In stepping back to avoid him, I tripped, and my trigger caught in the undergrowth. A keeper ran up in time to catch him as he fell, with the shot in his breast. He looked up at me, and said slowly, 'You've done for me at last, you hound!'"

"He meant to incriminate you."

"I suppose so. My gun had caused his death; but it was his own fault. The keeper had unluckily heard my last words. I only wonder they didn't bring it in murder. I had a very able defence. The quarrel related to my wife and some statements about her, which I had traced to Helton. I meant to horsewhip him publicly before I had done, but unfortunately I killed him instead."

They sat looking out into the long straggling village street, and saw Mrs. Walton come into the house.

* * * * * *

A year passed, bringing no change in the relations between Claude and his wife. A gradual lethargy had crept over Mr. Walton. The bullet had worked some damage to the lungs that was only now beginning to be apparent. At last this developed into real illness, a kind of wasting away, accompanied with all the symptoms of a galloping consumption. Lilian made an excellent sick nurse; her husband watched her moving quietly and gently about his room.

"I want you to tell me something, Lilian," he whispered one day. She paused, and coming to the bedside, laid her cool white fingers against his wasted hand. "I cannot possibly get through this," he said huskily. She looked at him suddenly, and knew that he spoke the truth. She had all the time been forcing the knowledge from her. "I may not be conscious for long, my darling, but I cannot leave you till I hear you say once you believe me completely innocent of any intention to kill Colonel Helton." Her fingers moved nervously in his; with her other hand she smoothed back the coarse hair; there might be tenderness in the action, but it lacked warmth.

"Yes, I believe you, Claude." Her manner gave the lie to her words. Even as she spoke she condemned herself for the untruth. This was a greater sin to her rigid formalism than to leave uncomforted the dying hours of her husband.

"Thank you." His fingers relaxed their feeble hold, and he closed his weary eyes. Once more, for the last time, he gave up the attempt. The barrier between them could never now be broken down. It was of no use to show that he disbelieved her, and of far less use to struggle again. He resigned himself, and from that hour sank rapidly. He was rarely fully awake. Swiftly and almost unconsciously he passed into the Valley of the Shadow.

G. E. Mitton.

AN ARCTIC EXPEDITION.

PICTURED walls and rich piled carpet,
Books and costly Dresden china,
Curtained windows overlooking
Gay balconies of flowers;
Light and warmth and dainty fragrance,
Dulcet music for the asking,
Comfort, elegance and leisure
Through all the sunny hours.

Rosy children dancing blithesome
Round a fair and happy mother;
Looks of love and health and merriment
In glowing cheeks and eyes:
Then a message and a mission,
And a glad responsive heart-thrill,
Hope undaunted leaping forward
To win the sailor's prize.

* * * *

Barren regions, lone and cheerless,
Frozen waters, sunless heavens,
Cold intense and cruel frost-bites,
Disease and spirits sore;
A disabled vessel, ice-bound
Midst the crushing "pack" and snow-drift;
A brave crew of luckless heroes
Their homes shall know no more.

One last struggle for existence,
A bold march across the channel
In search of peopled land and help
Before provisions fail.
Weary march! All bootless struggle!
Whitened shore-strewn bones attest it;
The sailor's prize is death; and none
Is left to tell the tale.

EMMA RHODES.

"YOU DO NOT REMEMBER YOUR MOTHER?" SAID THE STRANGER INTERROGATIVELY

THE ARGOSY.

DECEMBER, 1894.

THE GREY MONK.

By T. W. Speight, Author of "The Mysteries of Heron Dyke."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

SIR GILBERT'S GREAT SURPRISE.

ON leaving his wife John Clare engaged a hansom and was driven direct to Gray's Inn Square. His object was to find Kirby Griggs and hear again from his lips the story which had already been told him by Everard Lisle. The lawyer's clerk was on the point of going out for his midday meal, so John secured him, and, taking him to a restaurant at which it was possible to engage a private room, he treated him to what Griggs later termed to his wife "a sumptuous repast," and did not let him go till he had drawn from him every scrap of information which bore in any way on the facts he was bent on investigating.

With the aid of the light which his wife's narrative had thrown on the affair, the mystery which had heretofore enshrouded the proceedings and conduct of Martha Griggs was in a great measure dispelled. There could be no doubt that when her mistress was seized with fever and taken to the hospital, the temptation to decamp with the latter's money and luggage had proved too potent for the woman's ill-balanced mind. Having once crossed the narrow boundary which divides honesty from its opposite, it was characteristic of her mighty disposition, surcharged with feminine vanity, that she should masquerade in her mistress's gowns and jewellery and pass herself off under a preposterous name culled from one of her favourite penny romances. What had been her intentions with regard to the disposal of the child after she should have reached England could not even be surmised. Her death, so sudden and unforeseen, had put an end to everything as far as she was concerned.

It would be a difficult matter to analyse John Clare's thoughts and feelings as he journeyed homeward after parting from Kirby Griggs. That which had been no more than a supposition when he left the Chase a few hours before, had now been converted into an indisputable fact. He was going back home to greet his new-found daughter, and that daughter was none other than she who had hitherto been known to the world as Ethel Thursby!

Now did he understand how it happened that from the first he had felt himself so unaccountably drawn towards her. He had read something in her face which had at once puzzled and attracted him; it had been to him like one of those faces which sometimes confront one in dreams, which one seems to know vaguely, but which utterly sets at defiance all one's efforts to endue it with a personality. But surmise and conjecture were at an end. She was his child—his own! He had proved it beyond the possibility of a doubt. So strange, so bewildering, and yet so wonderfully sweet did it seem, that for the time he was as a man walking in a phantasy.

Everard Lisle, on reaching London, had found Luigi Rispani and had obtained from him the address he subsequently gave John Clare, which enabled the latter to go direct to the boarding-house where his wife was staying.

Luigi was in doleful dumps. The bill for one hundred and twenty pounds, which bore the joint signatures of himself and his uncle, had fallen due, and the sum total which the pair of them could scrape together towards meeting it did not amount to much over thirty pounds. To make matters worse for the younger man, for the last few days Captain Verinder had been missing both from his lodgings and his usual haunts, nor did anyone seem to know what had become of him. But pity in such cases is but cold comfort, and he did not content himself with that. Before parting from Luigi he put into his hand a cheque for the full amount of the promissory note.

Everard Lisle's capital did not amount to much more than three hundred pounds in all, and was made up of a small legacy bequeathed him by a relative, supplemented by his own savings, for he had no extravagances and was of a thrifty disposition. To finish with this incident, it may be recorded that about a fortnight later John Clare asked Everard to be the bearer of a cheque for a hundred and twenty pounds from him to Luigi Rispani. He had been reading over for the second time the notes of the interview between Luigi and Sir Gilbert, after the former's release from the strong room, as transcribed by Everard from his shorthand memoranda, after which he had gone to his father and made certain representations to him, the outcome of which was the cheque in question.

Great was John Clare's surprise when told that the promissory note had already been met and by whom. He made no attempt to press the cheque on Everard, but quietly put it back into his pocket. He

would not spoil the aroma of a fine action by bringing it down to a cash level.

To return.

When Everard got back from London, bringing with him Mrs. Clare's address, he found that in the course of the afternoon Mrs. Forester had driven over from the Shrublands—the house at which Lady Pell had been visiting previous to coming to the Chase—and had insisted upon carrying Lady Pell and Miss Thursby back with her, with the understanding that they were not to return to Withington till the morrow.

Although he had not seen Ethel for a week, not since he had parted from her before setting out on that journey to America which had been stopped short at Liverpool, it was yet a secret relief to him to learn that, at the earliest, they could not meet for another day. And in twenty-four hours much might happen.

Everard Lisle was too clear-sighted not to perceive in what direction, when duly sifted, the evidence bearing on Ethel's parentage, which he had been enabled to bring together, all tended. As yet there was one big gap which required to be filled up, but it might well be that Mr. John Clare's investigations on the morrow would prove successful in bridging over the hiatus, or, in other words, in forging the last link in a chain of evidence which would then be complete and perfect in every part. Well, and what then? he asked himself. Should the foreshadowed end come to pass, ought he to be anything but glad, jubilant, happy? Certainly he ought to be all that and more, because in that case into his darling's life there would come a happiness greater and richer than her dreams had ever pictured.

And yet!—and yet!—There are two sides to every question, and when Everard thought of the other side to this one his heart grew faint within him. "I trust that I shall at least know how to do my duty," he said to himself with proud bitterness.

After his interview with Kirby Griggs, John Clare got back to the Chase in ample time for dinner. On leaving home in the morning he had merely told his father that a pressing matter of business would take him to London for a few hours, and Sir Gilbert had asked no questions. This evening father and son dined alone. A note from Lady Pell had come to hand in the course of the afternoon, stating that she had been persuaded into staying another day at The Shrublands, but that she and Miss Thursby would be back at the Chase without fail on the morrow.

John Clare kept his news to himself till dinner was over, and Trant had finally shut the dining-room door, leaving the two gentlemen over their dessert. John would not tell it before, fearing lest his father's mental excitement on hearing it might take away his appetite for the time, which, in view of all he had gone through of late, was not a desirable thing to do.

"Father, you would hardly guess where I have been to-day," he began, in as indifferent a tone as he could assume as he cracked and began to peel a walnut.

"I am a poor hand at guessing, Alec."

"I have been to London and have had a long interview with my wife."

"So!—Only some very strong motive, I should imagine, would have impelled you to seek such an interview."

"It would have been next to impossible to find a stronger motive—as you shall hear."

He finished peeling his walnut before he resumed.

"As the result of a vile conspiracy you had been led to believe that Luigi Rispani was your grandson. In the anonymous letter written by me, which was the first thing to open your eyes, you were informed that your grandchild was a girl and that she had died in infancy. Only the day before yesterday certain facts were brought to my knowledge which led me to doubt whether my daughter really had died when only a few months old, as I had been induced to believe, and whether, in point of fact, she might not still be living. It was the determination to get at the truth of the matter which led me to seek an interview with my wife."

He had spoken in studiously quiet tones, but already Sir Gilbert's hands were twitching with nervous excitement.

"Yes, Alec, yes. And the result of your interview?"

"Was to satisfy myself that my long-lost daughter is indeed still alive!"

For a little space Sir Gilbert sat staring straight before him in speechless astonishment. Not all in a moment could his mind take in and assimilate the amazing news which had just been told him.

"Have you fully assured yourself, Alec, of the truth of this?" he said at length. "That woman—— But I do not wish to speak further of her. Only, you know how she imposed upon me; may she not have done the same by you?"

John shook his head. "There is nothing to apprehend on that score. Not the least singular part of the affair is that till to-day she herself neither knew the whereabouts of the child, nor whether it was alive or dead."

"You surprise me more and more." He drew a deep breath. "Oh! Alec, does it, can it mean a daughter for you, and a granddaughter for me?"

"That is what it means, father."

"And where is she? when shall I see her?"

"She will arrive at the Chase in the course of to-morrow."

"Arrive here to-morrow? So soon! Already my heart goes out to meet her. I long to see her, to embrace her."

"She is no stranger to you. You know her already."

"Alec, you trifle with me. I am an old man, and—and——

"Father, I am not trifling with you. On such a subject I would not for the world. What I said just now is the truth. Your granddaughter, under the name of Ethel Thursby, is known and liked by you already."

"Ethel Thursby my granddaughter!"

"There cannot be a shadow of doubt about it."

As before, Sir Gilbert sat in speechless amazement, but this time, if such a thing were possible, his amazement was intensified a hundredfold.

"It is indeed a 'strange eventful history' that I have to narrate to you," resumed John Clare. "Would you rather that I put off telling it you till to-morrow, or——"

"Certainly not. There's no time like the time present. Now that you have told me so much you must tell me all. I shall not sleep a wink to-night unless you do."

Thus adjured, John Clare began the narrative with which the reader is acquainted.

Lady Pell and Ethel did not reach the Chase till after luncheon next day.

Over breakfast father and son agreed that it would be best to entrust her ladyship with the task of breaking to Ethel the news of her surprising change of fortune, whom they would see later on.

"It seems to me," said Sir Gilbert, "that we owe this discovery, in the first place, entirely to the efforts of young Lisle."

"That is undoubtedly so," replied John. "Had he not first moved in the affair, the chances are, nay, it is almost a certainty, that the truth would never have been brought to light."

"We owe him an immense debt of gratitude. In what way can we best contrive to repay at least a part of it?"

"As I understand the affair, he and Ethel are engaged to each other."

"True. For the moment the fact had escaped my memory. And yet it was only the other day that I congratulated the pair of them."

The two looked at each other for a few moments in silence.

"But the heiress of the House of Clare! One has a right to expect that she should make a very different match." It was Sir Gilbert who spoke.

"Very true. Still, it may be as well to bear in mind that but for Everard Lisle, the House of Clare would never have known that it had an heiress."

"Yes, yes; of course one can't forget that. As I remarked before, the debt is an immense one. But as regards this engagement, what do you advise?"

"Simply that for the present you and I do nothing at all in the affair, but wait and see how matters work themselves out between the young people."

"Um—um. One can pretty well guess the result of that."

"If Lisle is the man I take him to be, when he finds Ethel acknowledged as your granddaughter, one of his first acts will be to offer to release her from her engagement."

"Do you think so? Indeed, I shouldn't wonder if you are right. Lisle's a gentleman through and through, or else I was never more mistaken in my life. But in that case, what about the girl?"

John Clare smiled. "Being of the sex she is, who can foretell what she may choose to do, or not to do? But in any case, it appears to me that you and I must abide by the result, whatever it may be."

"I agree to that. Yes, yes, whatever the dear girl may choose to do shall be fully endorsed by us."

It seemed to John Clare, although he did not say so, that what Ethel would choose to do in such a contingency admitted of very little doubt. He felt intensely grateful to Everard Lisle, and he had already made up his mind that it should be owing to no fault of his if the young folk were not made happy.

Everard was not at the Chase this morning, it being his day for collecting the rents of sundry outlying farms, but he might be expected there in the course of the afternoon.

CHAPTER XLIX.

PAYMENT IN FULL.

It had been one of those softly brilliant days in late October, which sometimes come as if to haunt us with the ghost of the dead and gone summer. The sun had set in a golden haze, and the amber reaches of the upper sky were darkening slowly as the shades of advancing night crept upward from the east, when Ethel and Everard met face to face in the park.

Everard had collected his rents and seen to various other matters, and on his way to the Chase had called at the bank and paid in his day's receipts. At the Chase he had seen neither Sir Gilbert nor John, but as he had nothing special to see the Baronet about, he had contented himself with leaving a note for him on the library table, having reference to one or two matters in which his employer was specially interested. He was ignorant of the return of Lady Pell and Ethel from The Shrublands when he set off to walk across the park home.

Scarcely had Lady Pell had time to take off her bonnet and cloak on her return, before she received a message to the effect that Sir Gilbert would like to see her in the blue parlour at her earliest convenience, and there she presently found both the Baronet and his son.

Then to her in turn was unfolded the extraordinary story which had

been told by John to his father the night before, followed by a request that she would take upon herself the office of breaking the news to Ethel before either her father or grandfather should see the girl, which her ladyship willingly agreed to do.

Into the particulars either of that interview, or of the subsequent one between the astounded girl and the two men we need not enter. They must be left to the imagination of those readers who have followed our narrative thus far.

On one point only is it needful to give the details of what passed. It was after Lady Pell had broken her news and Ethel's bewildered faculties had recovered in part from the shock, that the latter said, "You have told me nothing about my mother, Lady Pell. Is she living or dead?"

So wholly unexpected was the question that for a few moments her ladyship was thoroughly nonplussed. Yet the question Ethel had asked was one natural to her sex and age. Whenever she had speculated about her unknown parents, or had indulged in day-dreams about them, her silent cry had been, "Mother, where are you? Mother, I want you!" It was not a father whom her heart had gone out in search of. So now, when told that the father from whom she had been separated when an infant in arms, had in some wonderful and as yet unexplained way found her again, the question anent her mother sprang involuntarily to her lips.

"I have told you all that I was commissioned to tell you, my dear, and beyond that my lips are sealed," replied her ladyship with an amount of hesitation quite unusual with her. "Of your mother I can tell you nothing, and if you will take my advice, you will ask no question about her of either your father or your grandfather. You may rely upon it that you will be told all it is requisite for you to know, and beyond that I feel sure that you will not seek to pry."

It is almost needless to state that at the ensuing interview the name of Giovanna Clare was not mentioned. Ethel was still left purposely in the dark as regarded all those points of her history with which her mother was concerned, for since John Clare could not have spoken of his wife to their daughter except in terms of the severest censure, he preferred not to speak of her at all. On one point, however, Ethel was quite clear, for her father had given her distinctly to understand that it was entirely due to Everard Lisle's efforts that they two had been brought together.

The moment the interview was over she had hurried to her room. Her eyes were dim with tears, but they were tears of happiness. She wanted to be alone—she wanted to sit quietly with shut eyes and try to realise the change which had come over her life within the last two hours. So strange and wonderful did it seem, that more than once she asked herself, in all seriousness, whether it was true that she was really awake and not the victim of some inexplicable hallucination.

As she stood before the window, she caught sight of Everard Lisle

crossing the park on his way to the Chase. He had left the dog-cart, which had taken him on his rounds, at Elm Lodge, not knowing how long he might be detained by Sir Gilbert.

Ethel's heart seemed to stop beating for a couple of seconds and then went on at express pace. She had not seen her lover for a whole week, and now that they were both back at the Chase what less than a fairy-tale was it that she had to pour into his ear? Hastily putting on her outdoor things she left the house by a side door, and crossing the park to a spot where five huge elms grew within touch of each other, there waited. Close by ran the narrow footpath which led from the Chase to a door in the boundary wall of the park of which Everard Lisle possessed a key, and three minutes' walk beyond which was Elm Lodge. It was by this footpath that he went to and from the Chase, and so saved himself a long detour by way of the main entrance to the park.

Not long had Ethel to wait. Presently she saw Everard in the distance, pacing along with downcast mien and eyes which seemed to see nothing, unless it were some inward pictures conjured up by his own fancy. As a rule his bearing was so resolute and self-assured, he fronted the world so confidently, that Ethel could not help being struck by the change.

Not till Everard was within a few yards of her did Ethel emerge from the umbrage of the trees and go slowly to meet him. He gave a great start the moment his eyes fell on her, and all his face lighted suddenly up as she had foretold it would. Three or four quick strides brought him to her side, and the same instant she was enfolded in his arms and strained close to his heart. Gently disengaging herself she said—

"Is this the way to treat an unprotected female? You ought really to try to get the better of your primitive instincts. Marriage by capture went out centuries ago. But, oh, Everard, I have so much to tell you!"

She took his arm and together they began to pace slowly to and fro in the shadow of the great trees.

"Do you know, sir, in whose company you are?" she playfully went on presently. "Do you know that she who is now speaking to you is Miss Clare of Withington Chase?"

Everard stopped dead.

"Then what I thought must be true has come true!" he said; and on the instant all the gladness died out of his face, and half his youth seemed to go with it.

But Ethel was not looking at him just then and saw nothing of the change.

"Yes," she resumed, "henceforth my name will be Ethel Thursby Clare. Only an hour ago I was told. I am no longer a waif, a nobody's child. The mystery of my birth is a mystery no longer. I have found a father, a grandfather, a home—though, thanks to my

dear aunts, I have never known the want of the last—and I owe them all to you—to you—to you!" As she spoke she faced him suddenly and gazed at him with deep love and devotion in her eyes.

"But do you not see, cannot you comprehend," cried Everard in deep dejection, "how this change in your fortunes affects the whole position of affairs as between you and me? When I sought and won from you a promise to become my wife, I knew you only as Ethel Thursby, a portionless girl no higher in the social scale than myself. To-day I know you as the descendant of an old and honoured family, as the granddaughter of a man both proud and rich, who will naturally be justified in expecting that when Miss Clare marries it will be some person very different from one of his own salaried dependents."

"When you took me for your promised wife, you did so with your eyes open, knowing me to be what I was—a nameless waif—and having no certainty that one day it might not be shown that I was the offspring of beggars, or worse. But did you allow that prospect to deter you in the least? You know well and I know well that you did not; and if it had been proved that I was the descendant of a family of thieves instead of the Clares of Withington, I have such faith in your love for me that I believe you would still have said: 'I care not whose child you are; you are still my promised wife.'"

"In believing so you do me no more than justice."

"Then perhaps you will be good enough to explain why the fact that Sir Gilbert Clare is my grandfather should modify or alter in any way the conditions of our engagement."

"We need scarcely trouble ourselves with the why or the wherefore while the indubitable fact remains. The revelations of the last few hours have served to fix a great gulf between you and me. There is no option left me, none, but to release you from your promise, to give it back to you unconditionally."

"Oh, how bitterly proud you are!" cried Ethel, her eyes flashing. "But supposing I refuse to be released, supposing I refuse to take back my promise, as I most assuredly do—what then?"

"In that case I can but lay it at your feet. When a prisoner's fetters are knocked off he has no option in the matter; he is simply told that he is free. There is one point which neither you nor I should allow ourselves for one moment to forget. You can no longer claim to be your own mistress. Your duty and obedience are due to others. Those others will have views, wishes, prospects in connection with one so dear to them which you cannot afford to disregard."

Ethel shook her head. "Obedience sometimes degenerates into weakness, and wrongs done either to oneself or others are none the less wrongs even if dignified with the name of duty. But I will say no more now, Everard. I see that it would be useless to argue with you. And I must hurry back, for I have long outstayed my time. When we next meet it will be my turn to triumph." Her eyes

laughed up at her lover as he stooped and pressed his lips to hers. Then without pausing she flew towards the house.

Merely taking off her hat and jacket, Ethel went direct to the library, where she found both Sir Gilbert and her father, who had been on the point of going to their rooms to dress for dinner. They both welcomed her with a glad smile.

"I sent in search of you half-an-hour ago, but you were nowhere to be found," said the Baronet. "Where have you been hiding yourself? But come up to the fire. I can tell the wind has got round to the east again by the twinge in my left shoulder."

Seating herself on a hassock near the fire, Ethel spread out her hands between her face and the blaze. One of her father's hands lingered for a moment caressingly on her hair.

Although she did not in the least falter in her purpose, her heart was beating much faster than was common, and there was an odd little quaver in her voice when she spoke.

"I have been for a ramble in the park," she said, "and there I met Everard Lisle. Indeed, it was on purpose to meet him that I went, for we had not seen each other since before he set out on that journey which ended so unexpectedly at Liverpool."

"Um—um," murmured the Baronet.

"Then, of course, you had much to say to each other," remarked John Clare. "Doubtless Mr. Lisle was greatly surprised at what you had to tell him."

"I don't think it came upon him altogether as a surprise. Although he did not say so, I fancy he suspected the truth before."

"I have never found Lisle deficient in perspicacity," said Sir Gilbert as if speaking to himself.

"I hope neither of you has forgotten that I am Everard Lisle's promised wife," said Ethel with a little gasp, as her eyes glanced from one to the other and then were again averted.

"That is a fact which neither your grandfather nor I would be at all likely to forget," replied John, gravely.

There was a pause. Presently John reached forward and again laid his hand on her hair. "Darling, you have something more to tell us—I feel sure of it," he said very gently. "Speak. You have nothing to fear."

"Yes, I have something more to tell you. Everard insisted on giving me back my promise and that all should be at an end between us."

The eyes of the two men met across the figure of the crouching girl.

"Doubtless he had some more or less valid reason to urge for insisting that the engagement between you should be broken off." It was her father who spoke.

"Oh, he was quite explicit as to his reasons. I am no longer the nameless, portionless girl to whom he engaged himself, but the grand

laughter of Sir Gilbert Clare of Withington Chase; whereas, he is only Sir Gilbert Clare's dependent."

"I felt sure from the first that Lisle had all the instincts of a gentleman," interpolated the Baronet.

"Well, my dear, and what answer did you make this very self-willed young man?" queried John.

"I refused to take back my promise, and told him that whatever might be the alteration in my position and prospects I owed it wholly to him, but that as between him and me nothing whatever was changed."

"He had something to say to that, I have no doubt."

"He persisted in saying that all was at an end between us, and bade me remember that there were others whom I must now consider, and who have a right to expect the duty and obedience which is their due."

The Baronet nodded his head as one in thorough accord with the views thus enunciated.

"Yes—and then?" said John.

"Then I left him and came direct to you"—with a gesture that included both the men.

"You acted very rightly, my dear," remarked her grandfather.

"Both my father and I are fully conscious of our indebtedness to Mr. Lisle," said John. "And you may take my word that neither of us is disposed to undervalue it. But that is not the question before us just now. The points we are anxious to be satisfied upon are, that your happiness is really bound up with your engagement to Mr. Lisle; that you feel inwardly assured not merely that you love him, but of the depth and sincerity of his affection for you, and finally, whether under all the circumstances of the case, it is not desirable that your engagement should remain in abeyance, say for six months, or even for three, with the view of proving at the end of that time whether you really do care for each other as much as you believe you do now."

"Dear father"—she spoke the words with a certain sweet shyness, which thrilled him as with a sense of exquisite music—"put us to whatever test may seem best to you. I have no fear for either Everard or myself. We will submit ourselves to you in every way!"

"Is that so?" said John with a smile and a lifting of his eyebrows. "What, then, if I were to say, I will have no more of this engagement; that it shall come to an end from this hour!"

"That is a question there is no need for me to answer, because I am quite sure you will never say anything of the kind!"

Sir Gilbert chuckled.

"You are no match for the young monkey, that's evident," he remarked. A second later he pulled the bell-rope that was within reach of his hand, and to the servant who came in, he said: "Order dinner to be put back half-an-hour, and then have word sent at once to Elm Lodge that I expect Mr. Lisle to dine here this evening!"

As the man left the room, Sir Gilbert turned to Ethel.

"There shall be no more talk of broken engagements, nor of putting you and your lover to the test. The debt which I and your father owe to Everard Lisle can only be paid in full by giving him our greatest treasure."

Ethel stood up, surprise, doubt, joy, wonder were all expressed in the look she bent on the old man.

"Oh, grandpapa, do you really mean it?" she gasped.

"Most really and truly I mean it!"

With a sudden impulse she seated herself on his knees and flung both her arms round his neck.

"You have made me the happiest girl in England," she murmured brokenly.

CHAPTER L.

THE VEILED STRANGER.

It was only to be expected that Ethel's thoughts should often revert to the conversation with Lady Pell, in the course of which the latter had advised her to ask no questions about her unknown mother at her forthcoming interview with her father and grandfather. It was advice which Ethel had accepted and abided by, but if she had hoped that some mention would be made of that which she so longed to know by one or other of those two who had so many wonderful revelations to make to her, then was she doomed to disappointment. Neither then nor later was the existence of any such person as her mother alluded to in her presence.

It was the only cloud on Ethel's happiness. If her mother were dead, why had she not been frankly told that such was the case? If she were still alive, could it be that all mention of her name had been purposely omitted because she had been guilty of something which must keep her and her daughter for ever apart? But when Ethel asked herself this question, which she did more than once, her thoughts at once reverted to that unknown Mrs. Clare about whom she had heard so much while staying at the Shrublands, who was said to be the daughter-in-law of Sir Gilbert Clare, and to be an Italian by birth, who had lived for a short time at Maylings, but who seemed to have suddenly left the neighbourhood, for what reason Ethel had never been told, only a few days prior to the arrival of Lady Pell and herself at Withington Chase.

Then came another inevitable question. "Was Mrs. Clare of Maylings my mother?"

She had gathered from various remarks which Lady Pell had let drop from time to time, that Sir Gilbert had had four sons in all but that only the eldest had lived to arrive at man's estate. If such were the case, and if the late tenant of Maylings were really Sir

Gilbert's daughter-in-law, then it seemed to follow as a certainty that she could be the wife of none other than John Alexander Clare—of the man whom she, Ethel, now knew to be her father!

It was a startling conclusion to come to, but, under the circumstances, none other seemed possible.

In accordance with the promise he had made Giovanna, and after consultation with his father, John Clare wrote to a London solicitor empowering him to wait upon Mrs. Clare and propose certain pecuniary arrangements for her acceptance. Return of post brought a reply to the effect that on inquiry at Mrs. Clare's lodgings it had been found that she was temporarily out of town and that the date of her return was uncertain. Evidently till she should have returned nothing further could be done in the matter.

But at this time John Clare's wife was much nearer him that he was aware of. The sudden appearance before her of the husband whom she had long believed to be dead, and the astounding news of which he was the bearer, had combined to produce in Giovanna's mind a feeling of bitter remorse, as regarded certain episodes of the past, to which she had heretofore been a stranger. To know that, as a consequence of her misdeeds, she had forfeited all a mother's rights and privileges, that her daughter would be taught to think of her either as of one dead, or, if as still living, as of one the mere mention of whose name was enough to bring the blush of shame to her cheek, was to drink deeply of the waters of Marah.

Her thoughts did not dwell much upon her husband; she had never greatly cared for him, and she experienced no particular wish, even had such a thing been possible, to be reconciled to him now. It was on the image of her unknown daughter—of her little brown-eyed Netta, stolen from her so long ago and now grown to woman's estate, that her mind perpetually dwelt. Her husband had not deigned to tell her what strange chance had brought him and their daughter together again, no more than he had condescended to enlighten her about the facts of his own history from the time of her desertion of him; but all that mattered nothing. The one fact that her daughter was alive, and, so to speak, within reach of her hand, was all that concerned her. And yet in this world they must never meet!

Yes, an hour's railway journey would have brought them together, and yet were they as widely severed as if a thousand leagues of ocean rolled between them. There was madness in the thought. Day and night it wrought in her brain. She could neither eat nor sleep except by fits and starts at wide-apart intervals. In a week's time she seemed to have aged half-a-dozen years. Her only visitor was Luigi Rispan Sometimes she welcomed his coming and was grateful for his company; at others she wished him away that she might have more leisure to indulge in the long fits of silent brooding to which she was yielding up herself more day by day

"Luigi *mio*," she said to him one day, "I want you to go down to Mapleford and make certain inquiries for me."

"Yes, aunt, with pleasure. What is it you wish me to ascertain?"

"I want you to pick up all the information you can about my daughter—where and how my husband found her, with whom she has been living all these years, and the name she has been passing under, together with any other particulars it may be possible to ascertain. If you can, I should like you to see her, so that you may be able to describe her to me. I would give fifty sovereigns this moment for a photograph of her. You have a number of acquaintances in Mapleford, and you ought to be able to bring quite a heap of information back with you. Here are a couple of pounds for your expenses."

Luigi pocketed the money with alacrity and departed. He turned over several plans in his mind for obtaining the information wanted by his aunt, and at length he decided that he would go down by an evening train on the morrow, alight at Westwood, the station this side of Mapleford, where there would be little risk of his being recognised, walk from there to Elm Lodge and seek an interview with Everard Lisle. The latter had already proved, in a way not one man out of a thousand would have done, how well disposed he was towards him, and surely he would scarcely refuse to furnish him with the required information. In any case, although the task was one he by no means relished, he would go to Lisle first of all, and get from him all that he was disposed to give.

But, by a curious chance, the need to do so was spared him.

The following afternoon as he was turning out of Tottenham-court Road into Oxford Street, whom should he run against but Miss Jennings, the pretty barmaid, the drinking of whose health on her birthday, not wisely but too often, had been the proximate cause of Luigi's getting into such disgrace with Sir Gilbert, since which occasion neither of them had seen anything of each other. Miss J., who was nothing if not self-possessed, at once stopped, smiled, and held out her hand.

"Why, Mr. Clare, of all people in the world, who would have thought of meeting you?" said the girl.

Luigi noticed with a flutter of gratification that she still addressed him as "Mr. Clare," but the fact was that she did not know him by any other name.

"You see, London is such a little village," he smilingly replied, "that we can't very well help coming across everybody in it that we know. But what brings you, Miss J., so far away from the snuggery of the *King's Head?*"

Then it came out that the girl was about to be married, and had come to spend a short time with some relatives in London prior to that important event.

"Many things have happened down Mapleford way, Mr. Clare,"

she continued volubly; "more especially at the Chase—even in the little time since you gave us the go-by without saying a word to anybody."

"And what has happened at the Chase?" queried Luigi, with a studied air of indifference.

"Law! haven't you heard? It's in everybody's mouth, how Sir Gilbert's son that was believed to have been killed years ago has come back home from foreign parts, and how since then the old gentleman has discovered his long-lost granddaughter. The young lady had been staying at the Chase for some time before Sir Gilbert discovered that she was his granddaughter. But most likely you know her, for she was there part of the time you were. The name she went by was Miss Ethel Thursby, and—— But I see that you know her," for Luigi had given a violent start.

"Ethel Thursby Sir Gilbert's granddaughter!" he exclaimed. "Are you sure of this, Miss J.?"

"Quite sure. As I said before, everybody is talking of it, but as to how it all came about nobody seems to rightly know. Down at Mapleford you'll hear half-a-dozen versions of the affair in as many hours, but in my opinion they are one and all no better than guess-work, and so long as the few people who know the truth choose to keep their mouths shut, which so far they seem to have done, guess-work they are likely to remain."

It was not till the afternoon of the following day that aunt and nephew met. Giovanna was intensely interested in all that Luigi had to tell her. She made him describe to her minutely what Ethel was like, and when she found that for a short time they had sojourned together under the same roof, she questioned him again and again about all the details relative to her with which his memory was stored.

Then there came over her an irresistible longing to see her daughter—just for once; just for once to gaze into her eyes, and, if it were possible, to hear her speak. After that, she felt as if she should not greatly care what became of her. She had settled on no plan for the future. Whether she should remain, a lost unit, in the huge wilderness of London, or whether she should go back to Catanzaro, where there still lived some who were related to her, was just now a matter of no moment. She was consumed with a great thirst, and till that should be slaked nothing else mattered.

On the opposite side of the park of Withington Chase to that on which Mapleford is situated, in a pleasantly wooded hollow, nestles the obscure hamlet of Chadswell. Here in an old farmhouse a lady who gave the name of Mrs. Lucas and her nephew engaged apartments. It was an unusual time of year for anyone to seek country lodgings, seeing that November was now well advanced, but that was a matter for those who took the lodgings, and not for those who let them. The hamlet lies about half-a-mile beyond the precincts of the

Chase, and such of its inhabitants as are desirous of going to and fro between it and Mapleford on foot are in the habit of utilising a certain ancient right of way across the lower end of the park, which effects a considerable saving of distance, as compared with the high road, between the two places.

Aunt and nephew were of course none other than Giovanna and Luigi. The former had been brought to Chadswell by an inordinate longing to set eyes on her daughter (she could not have taken lodgings in Mapleford or its neighbourhood without running the risk of recognition, which, above all things, she was desirous of avoiding), and the latter had accompanied her at her special request. To Luigi the whole business was insufferably dull and wearisome.

Not till the short November days were closing in did Giovanna set foot outside her lodgings. Then, robed in black and thickly veiled, she made her way to the park, entering it by the stile made use of by the villagers; but instead of keeping to the public footpath, she turned sharply to the left in a straight line for the Hall. At such a season and such an hour there was no one to note her movements, and not till she reached the belt of shrubbery, intersected by numerous walks, which sheltered the house on two of its sides, did she deem it needful to exercise a little more circumspection. Luigi had given her to understand that Ethel was addicted to rambling about the grounds alone (in reality, he had known her too short a time to justify him in making any such statement), and her hope was that she might chance to encounter her while thus engaged.

And encounter her Giovanna did one dusky afternoon after she had been haunting the precincts of the Chase for more than a week. It was not in what was termed the shrubbery, but in the spinney that they met. News had been brought to the Hall that Dulcie Rigg was lying ill at the Tower, and after luncheon Ethel had walked across to inquire after the sick woman and make sure that she had all she needed. It was while on her way back that she came face to face with her mother.

Ethel could not help feeling somewhat startled when thus suddenly confronted by the figure of a tall stranger clothed from head to foot in funereal black. The stranger came to a halt full in front of her, and the path being of the narrowest Ethel could not but do the same. It seemed to her that through the interstices of the veil two eyes of a strangely penetrative quality were eagerly scanning every feature of her face.

"If I mistake not, you are Miss Ethel Clare, till lately known as Miss Ethel Thursby," said the veiled woman in a low rich voice, which yet had in it a tone that thrilled the girl, she knew not why.

"That is my name," replied Ethel with questioning eyes.

"I have come far to see you and speak with you," went on the other. "Not that I wish to detain you more than a very few minutes," she hastened to add. Then she paused, as hesitating

what to say next. "My excuse for seeking you out and accosting you," she presently resumed, "must be that many, very many years ago I knew your mother."

"Oh!" came in a low startled cry from Ethel's lips.

"You do not remember your mother?" said the stranger interrogatively.

Ethel shook her head sadly, while tears gathered in her eyes.

"I have heard something of your strange story, of how you and your father have been brought together again after having been separated for so long a time. But tell me this; does your father ever speak to you about your mother? nay, has he ever so much as mentioned her name in your presence?"

Ethel hesitated a moment, then she said proudly, "I am at a loss to know why you, a stranger, should put such questions to me."

The stranger sighed; to the girl it sounded like the sigh of an over-wrought heart.

"I do not ask them as one having a right to do so, but simply because I knew and loved your mother when she and I were young together, and because I remember you, an infant, lying in her arms."

"If my father does not speak to me of her," said Ethel softly, "it is probably because she is dead." Then with a little catch of her breath, she added, "But you, who were her friend, doubtless know far more about her than I can tell you; indeed, I can tell you nothing."

The stranger's bosom was rising and falling as if with some hardly suppressed emotion.

"Yes," she presently said, "I think my friend of long ago must be dead; not that I speak as one who knows; and it must be to spare your feelings that your father never mentions her name. But you will sometimes think of her with kindly affection, will you not?"

"Yes—yes—that I will not fail to do," said Ethel in a voice which was hardly more than a whisper.

"It is all you *can* do. And now I will detain you no longer. Let me kiss you once; don't refuse me that, and then I will go!"

As she spoke she lifted her veil, revealing to Ethel a countenance of noble proportions, but worn and white as that of one newly-risen from a bed of sickness, illumined by two eyes of midnight blackness, out of which there looked at her a soul so anguished and fraught with a sort of dumb despair, that the girl involuntarily recoiled a step. But only for an instant; the next both her hands went out to those of the other and she felt herself drawn forward, close—so close that she could feel the other's heart-beats against her bosom. Then the beautiful pallid face was bent to hers, and soft kisses, a dozen or more, such as those a mother bestows on her sleeping infant, were showered on the lips, the eyes and the brow of the astonished girl, interspersed with self-whispered exclamations in a language strange to Ethel, but which sounded far more soft and musical than her own.

Then suddenly she felt herself released—it was all over in a minute at the most—except that her hands were still imprisoned. For a space of some half-dozen seconds the stranger's eyes seemed to be drinking in her every lineament, as though she would fain fix them for ever in her memory. Then she suddenly lifted the girl's hands to her lips, imprinted on them two passionate kisses and dropped them abruptly.

"Farewell for ever," she said. "Remember me in your prayers."

As the last word left her lips, the veil fell like a shroud over the ivory-white face and anguished eyes, and almost before Ethel realised it she was alone.

It was late when Giovanna got back to her lodgings—so late that Luigi was becoming seriously uneasy about her. It had been raining heavily since seven o'clock, and when she did arrive her garments were saturated. She vouchsafed no explanation, and Luigi knew better than to ask her for any. But he could not help looking at her, for two large hectic spots burnt in her cheeks, and her eyes shone with a strange feverish light in which there was yet a far-away look as though her mind were otherwhere, and she was only half-conscious of the hour and her surroundings.

"Good gracious, aunt, you are wet through!" exclaimed Luigi after watching her for a few moments. "You will catch your death of cold."

She came to herself, as it were, with a start.

"It is nothing, I never take cold," she said. "All the same, I feel rather tired and will say good-night at once, if you don't mind. I am sorry if I have kept you up." Then laying a hand affectionately on his shoulder, she added: "I have seen her, Luigi *mio*, I have talked with her, my arms have held her, my lips have touched hers! I am very, very happy."

Next morning, when she failed to come down at her usual hour, Luigi sent the girl of the house to call her; but she was beyond the reach of any earthly voice. She had died in her sleep peacefully and without a sound.

"Disease of the heart of long standing, accelerated by cerebral excitement," was the verdict of Dr. Mallory.

CHAPTER LI.

SAFE IN PORT.

THE marriage of Everard Lisle and Ethel Thursby Clare did not take place till the following April.

Sir Gilbert, his son, his granddaughter and Lady Pell spent the winter in the South of France, where they were joined in February by

Everard on his return from Pineapple City, whither he had gone at John Clare's request (for Sir Gilbert strongly objected to his son's going in person) to wind up his affairs, which had been looked after during the past few months by a trusted subordinate, and to dispose of the business.

But it now becomes requisite to go back a little, for many things had happened before Sir Gilbert and the others got back to the Chase.

The first to whom our attention is due are the dear twin-sisters of Rose Mount.

On the morning of the day following that scene at the Chase when Sir Gilbert had unconditionally sanctioned the engagement of his granddaughter to Everard Lisle, Ethel asked her father whether he had any objection to her writing to her "aunts" at Mapleford and informing them of all the wonderful things which had befallen her in the course of the last four-and-twenty hours.

Not only had John Clare no objection to the sisters being informed, but he suggested that instead of Ethel writing to them, Everard Lisle should be sent to them as a special envoy, not only to tell them the news, but to bring them back, *vi et armis*, on a long visit to the Chase.

It was a task which Everard accomplished to the satisfaction of everyone concerned. Of the meeting between Ethel and the sisters, when at length the latter had been persuaded into accepting Sir Gilbert's hospitality, and of the genuine welcome accorded them, we have not space left to speak. It will be enough to say that, a little later, at Sir Gilbert's earnest persuasion, they agreed to leave Rose Mount and St. Oswyth's and make their future home at Maylings (of which they were to become the tenants at a nominal rent), where they would be next door, as one might say, to their "dear girl." That Tamsin should accompany them to their new home was a foregone conclusion; indeed, it would not have seemed like home without her.

John Clare's Christmas present to the sisters, to whom he felt himself so deeply indebted, took the form of a pony and basket carriage. It was a luxury which they had denied themselves ever since the break in their fortunes, but with Vale View House let on a seven years' lease the need for their doing so no longer existed.

In the course of the winter Mrs. Tew was married, the man of her choice being none other than Dr. Mallory, the most popular of the Mapleford *medicos*. As Lady Pell said, the affair was quite a little romance. It appeared that the canon's widow and the doctor had been in love with each other thirty years before when they were young folk living in quite a different part of the country. As is often the case, something had happened to separate them, and for a quarter of a century or more they had wholly lost touch of each other; so much so that for aught either of them knew the other might be dead.

Chance, or accident, one day brought them together, and to their mutual surprise they discovered that the ashes on the altar of their early love which they had believed to be long extinct, still smouldered, and needed nothing but propinquity and favouring circumstances to fan them into a flame which one might pretty safely assume would expire only with life itself.

If the canon's widow believed—which she did firmly—that Dr. Mallory had lived unmarried all these years because he had never got over his early disappointment, it was a charming belief, and certainly the doctor himself would have been the last man to undeceive her.

Little now remains to be done save to furnish the reader with a few brief particulars of the after fortunes of sundry of the characters with one or more episodes of whose life-history the foregoing pages have been concerned.

First, then, as regards the Keymers, father and son.

With Launce Keymer it was the case of the trickster being tricked. Always on the look-out for a woman with money, he met and was introduced to a widow, still young and pretty, whose husband had died two years before, leaving her a fortune of twenty-five thousand pounds. After having obtained a copy of the late Mr. Witley's will from Somerset House, and so satisfied himself as to the genuineness of the bequest, Keymer proposed and was accepted. Not till after his marriage did he discover that nearly the whole of his wife's fortune had been swallowed up in a huge banking failure which had occurred only a few weeks prior to his introduction to her. So extreme was his disgust and disappointment that, after having scraped together every shilling he could lay hands on, he quietly levanted, presumably to the land of the stars and stripes, and his newly married wife saw him no more.

Of Mr. Keymer, senior, it is enough to state that, partly as a consequence of his second wife's extravagance, which he was morally too weak to curb; partly owing to a growing neglect of his business, combined with, or the result of, an increasing fondness for the cup which, whether it cheers or no, *does* inebriate; and, lastly, because he found himself powerless to compete against the new brewery which a wealthy London syndicate had lately established in St. Oswyth's, he gradually drifted into the bankruptcy court, in the dreary morasses of which we will leave him floundering.

It was scarcely likely that Ethel, in her good fortune, should forget the existence of Miss Hetty Blair, the pretty nursery governess of Dulminster, who once on a time had rendered her such an important service. And when she heard that she was about to be married to a rising young lawyer of a distant town, a very substantial proof of her regard accompanied her wishes for her happiness and welfare.

Of Captain Verinder there is nothing pleasant to report. With such men as he it seems almost inevitable that as they advance in years their failings and vices should become accentuated, and tha

whatever virtues or good qualities they may originally have been possessed of, should grow "finer by degrees and beautifully less." In point of fact, the Captain began to deteriorate and go down-hill from the date of the collapse of his vile plot. He had built so much on it that its failure thoroughly disheartened him, and afterwards he scarcely seemed to care what became of him. His end was a sad one even for such as he. His body was fished out of the river-ooze down Deptford way. An ugly wound at the back of his head and his turned-out pockets told unequivocally how he had come by his death.

Everything was done that could be done both by John Clare and Everard Lisle in the way of benefiting Luigi Rispani and furnishing him with the opportunity of earning an honourable livelihood, but to no purpose. By means of certain influence which was brought to bear, three different situations were obtained for him, not one of which he kept longer than a month or two. Simply to give him money from time to time was merely helping to demoralise him still further. At length a situation was found for him as drawing-master in a college of his mother's sunny clime, and though he would never reach fame or fortune, aware that he had now only his own endeavours to trust to, he managed to keep his head above water, and earn a very modest livelihood.

Kirby Griggs, to whom, in one sense, John Clare felt that he owed so much, was not forgotten by him. For the man himself he could do nothing, but he succeeded in placing two of his sons with excellent City firms, and, by finding the requisite premium, in having one of his daughters, who had a natural gift that way, apprenticed to one of the best-known milliners at the West End.

In the course of the winter the marble tablet, which had been put up in the church of St. Michael to the memory of John Alexander Clare, was quietly removed.

When at length Sir Gilbert got back to the Chase, it was declared by everybody who saw him that he seemed to have taken a fresh lease of life. And so indeed he had, for when a man's constitution has nothing radically amiss with it, happiness undoubtedly helps to lengthen our days, and Sir Gilbert had now everything to render him happy. The MS. of his County History, so long laid aside, was enthusiastically taken in hand again as soon as his grandson-in-law returned from his honeymoon, and in the course of the following winter was brought to a triumphant conclusion. The title-page records that it is the joint production of "Sir Gilbert Clare, Bart., and Everard Lisle Clare," for before the marriage took place Sir Gilbert insisted upon the young man taking out letters-patent authorising him to add to his own name the surname of the ancient and honourable family of which he was about to become a member.

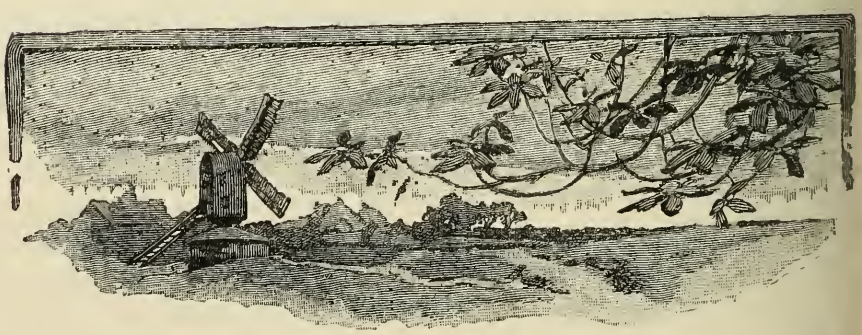
During the years of his expatriation, John Clare had devoted much of his spare time to experimental physics. It is a study which exercises a potent charm over such of its votaries as venture beyond

the threshold of its temple of severe delights, and in the laboratory, which John caused to be fitted up at the Chase, he spent many happy hours in the effort to master those more abstruse secrets, and to arrive at a more correct knowledge of those subtler elements of the material universe, than the conditions of his life had heretofore allowed of his doing.

A few parting words are due to Lady Pell. As soon as the wedding was over she set out to pay a long-deferred round of visits, but by the middle of autumn she was back at the Chase, which henceforward was *de facto* her home. It was not to be expected that her restless proclivities would quite desert her, and occasionally she would start off at an hour's notice, or no notice at all, for some place a couple of hundred miles away, but always to come back with increasing satisfaction, as time went on, to the old roof-tree, under whose shadow the romance of her life had had its beginning and its end.

Of Ethel and Everard what can be said in conclusion save that theirs was the quiet happiness of well-ordered lives, of duties conscientiously performed, and of unselfish devotion to the well-being of others? In such a soil the sweet flower of content blooms perennially and changes not with the seasons as they come and go.

THE END.



ALICE KING.

The following simple account of herself by Alice King will derive an additional but sad interest from the fact that its author has passed into the Land beyond the veil. When she wrote it she had no idea that for her the Great Summons had gone forth, and that when it appeared she would no longer be present. Blind to all the glories of earth, she has entered upon all those greater glories which mortal eye hath not seen. To one whose mind was singularly responsive to all things pure and beautiful, the change can be only faintly imagined. To the writer of these few words she was a close and intimate friend for many years. For a quarter of a century her graceful pen has added its charm to the pages of the "Argosy"; but here, as elsewhere, her place will know her no more. Few people deprived of sight have lived so thorough a life, entering into all its enjoyments, social, intellectual, and even physical, in a manner that surprised and delighted those around her. That her life should have been cut short in its meridian, is an abiding sorrow to many who knew her best. Few possessed a more cultivated mind or more charming spirit. Much of this was due to her mental energy, her determination never to yield to her infirmity, her anxious desire that her life, in spite of its affliction, should not pass without yielding fruit. But that she was able to compass so much was also due to one whose whole life was given up to her; a sister who seldom left her side even for an hour; and to whose self-sacrificing effacement only the name of Ministering Spirit can be applied. Not less earnest and admirable than the life of Alice King was this never-ceasing devotion; and side by side with Alice King's name must ever be linked the name of her sister FRANCES.—*C. W. W.*

IN West Somerset there is a beautiful tract of country bordered on one side by the Bristol Channel, and on the other by the sister-county of Devonshire. It is a land of heather-clad hills, sheltered valleys, the smaller of which are called in the language of the west-country "Combes;" a land of petulant, sparkling streams, where the wild red-deer browse and wander at will, now over the wilds of Exmoor, now in the thick woods; a land, the inhabitants of which in their characters, superstitions, and manners, and even their language, are in some respects a peculiar people, distinctly different from the rest of the peasantry of England.

Fifty years ago the characteristics of this corner of the west-country and its people were more strongly marked than they are now, when the steam-whistle, and the printing-press, and the schoolmaster had not found their way, and it was about this time when my scholarly

father, who had been a private pupil of Dr. Arnold, and my beautiful mother came to live at Cutcombe, a hill-country village, situated in the heart of the tract of the west-country I have just described.

Cutcombe is placed about 1000 feet above the sea-level, and Dunkery, the highest point in the West of England, is in the parish. There I was born, the youngest of four children, two sons and two daughters.

The Kings are a Yorkshire family, descended from John of Gaunt, from whom came the strawberry leaves in the ducal coronet seen in their crest. They have always been on the side of civil and religious liberty; one of them garrisoned the church of Kirby Malham in Yorkshire for the Parliament. My parents were cousins, and were both Kings. My paternal grandfather was the Vice-Chancellor of the county of Lancaster, my maternal grandfather was the Bishop of Rochester, one of the two bishops—the other being Bathurst, Bishop of Norwich—who laboured so nobly against overwhelming odds in the cause of Roman Catholic Emancipation. His wife, whose maiden name was Dawson, was a woman of much wit and of great personal attractions, and was the intimate friend of Edmund Burke.

My great-uncle, Captain James King, sailed with Captain Cook in his famous voyage round the world, and shared with him the glory of the discovery of the Sandwich Islands. When Cook was murdered Captain King took command of the expedition, and brought his vessels successfully back again into English waters. He was one of the most fascinating of men. Even Fanny Burney, accustomed as she was to the conversation of that age of brilliant talkers, owned and bowed to his spell, as she has recorded it in the pages of her diary.

I mention these circumstances connected with my family because they were an incentive to spur me on to get the better of the disadvantages of my blindness.

My sight was from the first extremely weak and imperfect; all the objects around me appeared to my childish eyes as objects in a mist. Gradually this faint gleam of sight faded away, and when I was seven years old I became entirely blind. This, however, did not in the least terrify or grieve me. Throughout my whole life my blindness has had this remarkable feature in it: I always have before my eyes a brilliant light, so that the whole air around me seems as it were incandescent; I appear to be walking in light. In this light I can call up at will all sorts of beautiful colours which I see mingled with the radiance, and forming part of it. Thus my blindness has always been for me in a certain way brightness.

As I grew older there came to me other abnormal peculiarities which have been mercifully sent as compensations. I can always tell when others are looking at me, and I can generally tell whether they are looking at me in kindness or the reverse. My sense of hearing is extremely sensitive, and through it I can read character in the tones of the voices of men and women round me. I can also discern character pretty accurately in the touch of the hand. I have certain

instincts for which I have no exact name, which sometimes make me foresee future events. My senses of touch and smell are excessively delicate; the former gives me the keenest pleasure in flowers and in their different scents; the latter is of much practical use to me. I can knit the finest silk in the most intricate stitches, and I have invented for myself a watch by which I can, by feeling, tell the time to a minute.

In childhood I did not have any special education on account of my blindness. I was instructed by my mother, who was a woman of much culture and of great natural ability. She taught me chiefly by heart and by my memory, which is very retentive and clear. I learned geography so thoroughly under her instruction that when I was a child I could describe with precision the position of any province in China or Tartary, or any country the most remote.

I was very fond of foreign languages from my earliest years, and I understand with more or less correctness seven tongues besides my own—French, German, Italian, Spanish, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. Some were taught me by my mother whilst I was a child, some I have learned with my sister since I was grown up. My father read aloud a good deal to my mother, and I was generally in the room, and took in part of what he read; thus as a child I picked up in this way much miscellaneous knowledge. My youngest brother also read to me a great deal, chiefly poetry, and talked to me about what he read. I owe much of my education to the pains my father and he took in directing my reading, and talking to me about various subjects. I always think that girls should be in part taught by men; it gives breadth and solidity to their character.

Our life in our retired west-country vicarage was more like a fragment of the old-world life of the last century than anything of to-day. We had few neighbours of our own rank, and our intercourse was chiefly among our village people, going in and out among them, and trying to up-lift and help them. It was thus that I gained that thorough knowledge of the west-country people, their characters, their manners and dialect, their superstitions and legends, which I have portrayed in so many of my stories and papers.

I spent much of my time out of doors in the free, bracing, hill-country air, well used to Exmoor rain and mist, for both came sweeping down pretty frequently upon us from the moor. In winter the roads were often, in a long frost, like glass for weeks at a time, so that we lived as in an enchanted palace cut off from the rest of the world. At night the wind from the moor would moan and sigh with a voice peculiar to itself, and would wake up all sorts of vague, weird fancies in an imaginative girl.

My parents accustomed me to the saddle from my earliest days, and I became a fearless horse-woman, and used to scamper over the hills dressed in their regal mantle of purple heather and golden gorse, and would ride merrily up and down paths that would be little less

than a nightmare dream to ladies and gentlemen who sail over the fields of the midland counties. I generally rode an Exmoor pony; there were two of them to which I was especially attached, beautiful, spirited animals, called Hebe and Colly—the west-country word for a blackbird. They were both most inveterate shyers, and retained the habits contracted on Exmoor throughout their lives. Their tricksy ways, and capricious starts and bounds, would have unseated many an experienced horse-woman; but my ponies and I knew each other thoroughly, and I seldom, if ever, parted company with my saddle. The intelligent eyes of my favourites used to change their expression in a moment when I came to their side to mount. I have always had a great love for all animals: my dogs have been my most constant and truest companions. My especial pets have been black-and-tan toy-terriers; two lie now in the vicarage garden, Sylph and Mimie; and two are now frisking in my present home on the shore of the Bristol Channel, Chica, and Jack, the latter a Bedlington terrier.

I began to write poetry almost as soon as I could speak, and cannot remember the time when some of my thoughts and fancies did not run in rhyme. My father was engaged, when I was a child, in translating the Æneid of Virgil into English verse; I used to sit on his knee while he was at work, and he would tell me the classic story, and all the personages in it would be as real to me as the people round me in my daily life. Then he would translate the Latin words into simple every-day English, and I would try to put them into rhyme, an exercise which helped to give me facility in language. My first appearance in print was when I was about ten; I then wrote two hymns in a volume of religious poetry published by my father.

When I was just gliding from childhood into girlhood my parents took all their children to Italy for some months, thinking it would be a finishing chapter in our education. It was a wonderful opening of my mind, in spite of my blindness, and seemed to waken up all my imagination.

My first novel, 'Forest Keep,' was written when I was still a girl in my teens, and was published by Messrs. Hurst & Blackett; other novels followed at various periods; the most popular of which was 'Queen of Herself.'

I have all my life owed a debt of gratitude to many literary men for the helping hands which they have stretched out to me. Foremost among these I must mention Prof. Henry Morley. I became acquainted with him when I was a young girl, and he took the greatest pains in forming my literary style, in reading over what I wrote, and criticising it carefully. He would often make me re-write several chapters at a time, and would never suffer me to be content with mediocrity. He used to tell me that every word must fit into its place like the bits in a mosaic pavement. Charles Dickens also gave me much advice and encouragement, and did his best to bring

me before the public. Mrs. Henry Wood put her kind, strong hand into the hand of the young unknown authoress, and led her into her own literary path. The guild of literature is generally said to be jealous and slow with regard to the admission of new members, but I can personally testify to the reverse; there are names in literature that I can never mention without affection and gratitude. I have found literary men to be the most true, most loyal, most generous friends that ever trod; chivalrous, and reverent, and tender, alive to my infirmity and to my womanhood.

My literary work is all done by an American type-writer; I can write my MSS. as easily and quickly with it as a person with sight writes ordinarily with a pen, and my MSS. are, of course, much more legible than written MSS. usually are. I have made in my type-writer one or two improvements which would, I think, be found a useful addition in all type-writers for the blind. My sister, who is my constant companion, and most emphatically my second self, looks over all my MSS., and corrects them with her pen; she has always read to me so much and so constantly in different languages, and in books of all sorts, that I have never taken the trouble to learn the Braille character, which is now so much in use in all blind schools for both reading and writing.

All my time which was not filled up with literature was, during many years of my life, even when I was but a girl, occupied in teaching and influencing the working men and lads in my father's parish. I held every Sunday a large Bible-class for them; there were upwards of seventy members in it of all ages, from men of sixty down to boys of twelve. There were many married men, fathers of families, and father and son would often sit on the same bench side by side. I used to use verbal instruction only in my class, and I always went into the room without ever having prepared a subject beforehand. I talked to all my men and boys in private separately, and thoroughly looked into the character of each. I established for them by my own efforts a reading-room, a cricket-club, a brass band, etc. I had great influence over them, even over the roughest and wildest. My blindness seemed to rouse their chivalrous instincts, and to make them peculiarly susceptible to be up-raised and ruled by me; they appeared often to have an almost superstitious reverence for me, and I could frequently impress them and subdue them by a touch of the hand. Every Christmas I gave a large party for them and some of the members of their families, in which a large, brilliant Christmas-tree was one of the chief features, and in which were often danced those picturesque west-country dances of strange names and graceful antiquated figures, which no doubt were popular in the west-country in the days of Queen Bess and before then.

From speaking to my men's class I learned to speak in public. I used to address large meetings, and always spoke with facility and confidence. I never troubled myself much to elaborate my speech;

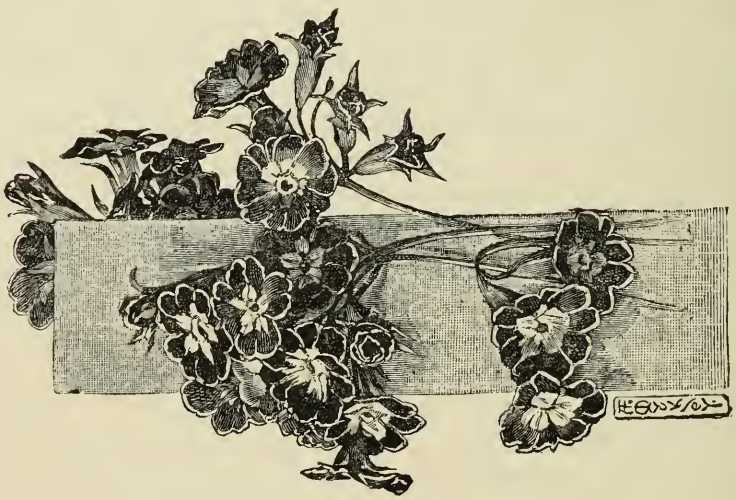
what I said appeared to come naturally, and, somehow, I always had incidents and illustrations at hand.

At my father's death, some five years ago, all my work in his parish was unavoidably given up. I had also then a nervous illness from which I have never quite recovered: my health does not allow me now to engage in work amongst working men and boys, and I am not able to speak in public.

I have always been very fond of music, and listening to good music has ever been one of my chief pleasures; but for many years of my life I found no time to learn any instrument, and I did not acquire even the most rudimentary musical knowledge. During my illness, however, when I was not allowed to engage in any literary work, I resolved to fill up my time by learning some musical instrument; so with my sister's help, who is a good musician, I mastered the first elements and then learned the guitar. My beautiful guitar is now my constant companion, and I can learn and retain by memory air after air and piece after piece; it makes a charming accompaniment to the piano. I also acquired in that period of enforced literary idleness, the art of making macrame lace, and that of working with the needle on large canvas.

I have written this slight sketch of my life and work in the hope that it may help and rouse others to battle with similar disadvantages, and successfully overcome them.

ALICE KING.



LUCY.

I.

MRS. WEIGALL sat by the fire in her sitting-room, very neatly dressed and rather peevish-looking, as usual. At least it was her usual expression when alone with her family.

Outside, the wind and rain of early winter held sway, and the occasional lumbering past of a van or other vehicle hardly constituted a sufficient reason for looking out of the window. To look out of window on fine days was Mrs. Weigall's favourite occupation, and nothing went on in the village-street without her knowledge. But on wet days like the present she read the newspaper, and sat in judgment on her contemporaries, especially the more distinguished ones. Sometimes her remarks exasperated her eldest daughter Alice (the eldest by a second marriage and the eldest at home), and then Mrs. Weigall was rather promptly snubbed. For Alice kept the household in great order, being learned, a University Extension Lecturer and a journalist.

She was seated now at a little desk in a corner near the fire preparing her weekly article on current literature for the *Chillington Beacon*, which was a high-toned paper, enjoying a wide provincial circulation. Mrs. Weigall's consciousness of the scribe's presence betrayed itself in the furtive and guilty glances which she cast in the direction of the writing-table whenever the newspaper crackled obtrusively. Alice prided herself on having sacrificed privacy to the family convenience, and trained herself to write in the common sitting-room; but all the same the family were dreadfully afraid of making a noise whenever she was at work.

The sitting-room had folding doors opening into a smaller room that in its turn led through a French window into a pleasant garden. Pleasant even in cheerless winter weather, and charming on sunny days when every breath of air came laden with the scent of sweet, old-fashioned flowers and trailing rose-bushes: when the birds sang all day in the branches of the two large lime-trees, and the bees kept up their murmurous work throughout the drowsy summer hours.

In the cosiest corner of the inner room, between the fire and the warmly curtained window, a couch was drawn up, and on this lay the slender, delicate form of a young girl. Although over twenty, Lucy Weigall still looked almost a child. With her tiny hands and feet, her small, pale face, her golden head, she had an ethereal air which made strangers describe her as angelic. And she really was the good angel of the family. Round her couch dissensions were hushed; Alice grew less overbearing, Mrs. Weigall less captious

while as for Bernard, the only brother, he knew no hours so peaceful as those that he spent with the little sister, whose frail body his strong arms carried tenderly, and to whose thoughtful spirit he never turned in vain for sympathy or advice.

Lucy had a natural talent for sympathy, just as Alice had a natural talent for lecturing, and Mrs. Weigall a natural talent for wearing becoming caps, and for blossoming into importance when strangers appeared.

It was really wonderful how Mrs. Weigall had contrived to keep up the family credit through all the vicissitudes which she had experienced. When she first married Mr. Weigall, and came to live in Chillington, she had means and an assured position as the elegant well-bred wife of a solicitor, member of an old-established firm which enjoyed the confidence of the county families. Gradually, through the dishonesty of a partner, wealth had departed, Mr. Weigall died of a broken heart, and his family came to live in the village of Rushleigh, a few miles out of Chillington. On leaving school, Bernard obtained a post in the County Bank and went every day to his work by train from Rushleigh. Alice made money by her brains and her pen, while Mrs. Weigall, always neatly dressed and prepared for any social emergency, stayed at home to look after Lucy, to criticise her family and to turn a smiling face to visitors, especially such members of the county families as still recollected her existence.

Mrs. Weigall by her first marriage had one daughter, Mary, who was not at home.

For fifteen years indeed she had been a stranger to her family, having even ceased to write to them.

She was nearly grown up at the time when her mother, Mrs. Peyton, became Mrs. Weigall, and she deeply resented the step which gave her a stepfather, not that Mr. Weigall was unkind to her, nobody was unkind to her; but Mary enjoyed having a grievance.

When about twenty-one she had abruptly left home, and gone as governess with an English family to Yokohama.

For a little while she had written home, then her letters stopped, and when Mrs. Weigall wrote to Yokohama for information she could learn nothing. The consul to whom she had applied said that Mary's employer and his wife died of an epidemic and the children had gone home in charge of a governess. "Was not the governess Miss Peyton?" To this question of the consul Mrs. Weigall did not reply. She could not tolerate the idea that Mary had returned to England but failed to communicate the fact to her family; and to her visitors, such as occasionally asked after Mary, Mrs. Weigall always implied that her daughter was still in Japan. Of course she did not say this in so many words, but she never said the contrary, and this reticence sufficed for her purpose.

Two newspapers lay in Mrs. Weigall's lap; a London one which she had finished, and the local one, which she had just taken up

Hardly had she opened the latter than she made a little movement of surprise. She glanced at Alice. Yes, Alice was putting away he writing; Mrs. Weigall was free to speak.

"Lucy," she cried, "Miss Astley's nephew has written to the lawyers. He is coming home. He will be here in less than a month!"

The news was exciting evidently. Lucy looked up with a gentle gesture of interest. Even Alice rose and followed her mother, who had walked into the inner room.

"I must read you what the paper says," continued Mrs. Weigall, settling down by the invalid's couch. "Information which will assuredly give general pleasure has reached us. Astley Hall will soon be tenanted. Mr. William Astley, the heir, has written Messrs. Trigg and Smythe, the late Miss Astley's solicitors, to say that he may be expected home in about two weeks. Mr. Astley writes from San Francisco. He is an American born, but in the old country will soon we hope, etc."

"Well, that is some excitement in prospect, at any rate," said Mrs. Weigall. "After all, I am glad the place is to remain in the family."

"The family is quite a new one," remarked Alice.

"All families must have a beginning," replied her mother. "I wonder if Mr. William Astley is married. Oh, no; here is an additional paragraph. He is actually a bachelor."

"What a chance for our many maidens," said Lucy, with her soft laugh.

Mrs. Weigall glanced furtively at Alice, but Alice had never looked more like Minerva, learned and severely celibate.

"Miss Vandeleur," announced a servant from the outer room.

"Maud, you flower-scattering angel," exclaimed Lucy, as a pretty young girl advanced, her hands full of a lovely winter bouquet, deep gold and pale yellow chrysanthemums mixed with brown and russet leaves. "You need not tell me; I *know* all that glory is for me."

"Of course it is," replied Maud, bending over the couch to kiss her smiling friend. She also was smiling, and yet as the two girls' eyes met a curious flicker of sadness crossed the face of each.

"You have heard the news?" said Mrs. Weigall interrogatively when her guest was seated.

"That Mr. William Astley is alive and well and on his way home? Indeed, I have heard that, and I may say I came out to escape the spectacle of my poor father's disappointment. He is naturally grieved for me; far more than I am grieved for myself."

"Mr. Vandeleur disappointed?" exclaimed Mrs. Weigall in surprise. "And why?"

"You never heard then? It is true we thought it best not to say much on the subject as long as there was uncertainty, but now there is no need for reserve. Miss Astley left a codicil to her will to the effect that if her nephew proved to be dead without heirs I was to

inherit £20,000 of her property. You know she and my grandmother were great friends at school," said Maud.

"I know," replied Mrs. Weigall, "and I always used to wonder why she showed you so little kindness during her life. But there! She was not particularly kind to anybody, poor woman. Twenty thousand pounds! No wonder Major Vandeleur feels such a loss."

"But he chiefly feels it for me," said Maud hastily.

"Humph," remarked her hostess.

"And I feel it for him," the young girl continued.

"*That* I can quite believe," replied Mrs. Weigall. "Well, I wonder what Mr. William Astley will be like. I hope he will not resemble his first cousin, Robert, who was a scapegrace and no mistake. I have heard that he made one or two efforts to soften his aunt's heart towards him by penitent letters, but in vain. If he be still alive and hears of his cousin's good fortune, how angry he will feel!"

"Poor man!" said Lucy gently.

"As you pity everybody, you can pity him, my dear," observed Mrs. Weigall. "But I assure you that when he left the neighbourhood fifteen years ago in disgrace with his uncle and aunt, he did not seem to have one redeeming point. He was handsome and pleasant-mannered, that was what helped him to impose upon people. We used to see a great deal of him at one time. He was rather attentive to my daughter Mary. But I am thankful she never married such a profligate."

"I wonder if Mary will ever come home," said Alice.

"I do not believe she could stand the English climate after so many years' absence from it," answered Mrs. Weigall hastily.

"The climate of Japan is not good," argued Alice.

"It cannot be as bad as ours," retorted her mother.

Here Lucy, as usual, interposed, and finally, Alice, always busy, went out; and Mrs. Weigall being called off by some household duty, Lucy and Maud were alone.

"I grieve for the loss of that legacy," said the former, taking her friend's hand with tender sympathy. "I had never mentioned it, not even to mother or Alice, but I did always hope Mr. William Astley would not be found."

"I grieve too," said Maud bitterly. "I would not mind if father would allow me to exert myself, to go as governess or companion—anything. But he will not. And oh, Lucy! this life of hopeless poverty, and poor father's constant depression, they are *so* hard to bear."

Lucy found nothing to say in reply. She could only look the deep pity she felt.

II.

When Bernard came home to dinner, his mother of course lost no time in communicating to him the great news of the heir's impending return. He heard it in silence at the moment; but was no sooner alone with Lucy than he said abruptly:

"So Miss Vandeleur loses her legacy."

"Yes. Maud was here to-day. She feels the disappointment very much, but more for her father's sake than her own."

"I expect he is more crabbed than ever," said Bernard.

"And now you can never speak to Maud," murmured Lucy.

"I could not have spoken even if she had got the money," replied her brother. "Do you not see Major Vandeleur's expression at the presumption of a poor bank clerk in aspiring to *his* daughter's hand."

"But if Maud loves you?—and I am *sure* she does," said Lucy.

Bernard covered his face with his hands for a few moments in silence. "It is no use thinking about such things," he said at last. "You are a dear little confidante, Lucy, and I am glad you should know my secret, although I should hate anybody else to have possession of it. But you must help me to resign myself to the thought that Maud is out of my reach. I must just grind on through the same weary round. There is not likely to be any miraculous interposition of fate in my favour."

He ceased speaking on the entrance of Mrs. Weigall and Alice. They had brought their work, and requested Bernard to continue reading the book he had commenced the night before.

This was the usual evening programme—a routine which nothing seemed destined to disturb, and Bernard had just taken up the volume when there came a sharp pull at the door bell.

"That sounds important," observed Lucy.

"I daresay it is a telegram about those lectures," said Alice.

"It can hardly be a message from the bank," said Bernard.

The door of the outer room opened, a sable-clad figure came forward, paused an instant under the arch of the folding-doors, then advanced into the midst of the wondering group.

"Mother!" said the stranger and lifted her veil.

"Mary!"—with a cry that was almost a sob, Mrs. Weigall sprang forward and threw herself into her daughter's arms.

The astonishment of the others may be imagined. Bernard and Alice sprang up, came forward, kissed their half-sister, then glanced at her with a furtive wonder.

She turned towards the couch and bent over Lucy.

"You were five years old, I think, when I left—a bonny, golden-haired little thing. Why do you lie here? Are you ill?"

"I am always an invalid. But, Mary, I am so glad to see you."

"Of course, so am I," said Bernard heartily.

Alice stood silent, for shyness always made her awkward.

"Lucy was five, and Alice—this is Alice, I suppose—was ten, and Bernard twelve. And now to see you all grown up makes me realise what a long time I have been away." Mary wound up this speech with a short laugh, not a very mirthful one, and sank into a chair by the fire. She was quite composed. It was the others who were agitated, Mrs. Weigall especially.

"Let me look at you," she said, and taking her eldest daughter's face between both hands, tried to turn it towards the light. But Mary shrank back. "There is not much to look at," she replied shortly.

"There never was; and now I am grey-haired and wrinkled scarred by time and——" She left her sentence unfinished.

"You have come from Yokohama?" inquired Mrs. Weigall, sitting down beside her.

"I left Yokohama years ago. I come from America; from San Francisco. I give you all warning," added Mary, "that I have come home a failure. I am poor, and I am ill. Fate has beaten me."

It was characteristic of Mrs. Weigall that she asked no further personal questions.

"If you were in San Francisco," she observed briskly, "perhaps you know our coming neighbour, William Astley."

"*William?*"

"Yes, not Robert. You remember Robert?" smilingly continued Mrs. Weigall.

"Yes," Miss Peyton answered slowly. "I remember Robert."

"He turned out a dreadful character. I forget whether that was before you went away or after. Anyhow, he had to leave the neighbourhood in disgrace, and was disinherited by his uncle and aunt. Old Mr. Astley, who died ten years ago, left all his money to his sister, and she left it to Mr. William Astley, if he could be found, or failing that, to various charities and so on. Not a penny to Robert. William, you know, is another nephew, the son of a brother who went out to America after a dreadful quarrel with his family. Naturally no descendant of his would ever have been thought of as heir, had Robert only behaved better."

"And how has William been found?" inquired Mary, after rather a long pause.

"Messrs. Trigg and Smythe sent a confidential clerk to America to look for him. I suppose he is accompanying William home."

"No," said Bernard, "Mr. Trigg was at the Bank to-day, and he happened to mention that the messenger they sent out is dead, poor fellow! William Astley, who, by-the-bye, was not at San Francisco itself, but in some other Western city, could not come away at once but took his passage for the middle of this month. The clerk was to have waited for him, but got a cablegram to say his wife was ill. He

started at once, and, strangely enough, died on the voyage of heart-disease. Nobody had even suspected that he was delicate."

"What a curious story!" remarked Alice. "Then there will be nobody to identify Mr. William Astley."

"Well, the clerk did that in America, you see," answered Bernard. "And he sent home a photograph of William, who seems to have the family type strongly marked although he wears a full beard. Do you remember how carefully clean-shaven old Mr. Astley always was?"

"Yes, and Robert—he never even adopted the then universal moustache," observed Mrs. Weigall; who added, turning to Mary: "I suppose you never saw or heard anything of Robert?"

"Did he go to America?" This counter-question was Mary's answer.

"Oh, not that I know of! I think I remember hearing that he went to Honolulu. But most bad characters turn up sometimes in San Francisco, do they not?" laughed Mrs. Weigall.

"I do not know," replied Mary coldly. She rose and, with a change of tone, continued: "I am tired. I suppose you can keep me here?"

This was not easy, for the Weigalls' small house possessed no spare room. Mrs. Weigall glanced in some embarrassment at Alice, but Alice dropped her eyes. Already her attitude expressed some hostility towards the new-comer.

"Mother usually sleeps in my room; but she can go into Alice's if you will take her place with me to-night," said Lucy, addressing Mary.

So it was arranged. But Lucy was a very light sleeper and she was awakened before midnight by a sound of stifled sobbing. Her first impulse was to speak: her next was to keep silence and not intrude upon a grief of which she did not know the source. But her gentle heart was strangely touched, and felt a yearning pity which translated itself into little tender words and ways towards the sombre half-sister who had so suddenly emerged from the distant unknown.

III.

'Of course, you always make excuses for everybody, and I daresay there is something to say for Mary. But, Lucy, I cannot forget that her presence here throws an additional burden upon Bernard, and deprives you of many comforts which you ought to have."

The speaker was Alice, who was looking distressed and rather angry.

Mary had been three weeks at home now, and showed no intention either of going away again or of seeking to support herself. Always silent, always sombre, she gave no account of herself, beat back her mother's attempts at questioning, and showed affection only for Lucy.

Alice and Mary had been antagonistic from the first, and at last Alice's irritation found voice in the above-recorded words.

"I do not speak for myself," she continued. "Heaven knows that I grudge Mary neither food nor shelter, and if *I* were the bread-winner of the family I hope I should be as loth to make her feel unwelcome as Bernard is. But if she expects from him, as she evidently does, the charity of a brother, she should, at least, show him the confidence of a sister. She ought to explain herself. She ought to say why she has been away from us without giving a sign for so long; she ought to say why she has returned to our midst at last, and on what grounds she expects us—or rather Bernard—to provide her with the bread of idleness."

"Dear Alice," said Lucy, softly, "do you think there is really need for poor Mary to explain herself? To me she looks a thoroughly heart-broken woman. She said she had come back to us a failure. Who knows in what bitter struggles, in what crushing disappointments her hope, her courage, perhaps her health, have ebbed away?"

"She seems quite well," grumbled Alice, though her look had softened.

"That is what people sometimes say to me," answered Lucy, with a smile.

"You? Oh, Lucy, when anybody with two grains of perception can see that you have not the strength of a fly! I believe that you are kept alive by your sympathy with others. If you had nobody to pity, you would die to-morrow."

"You spoil me just as mother and Bernard do. But I feel the more grateful in your case because you spoil nobody else, and least of all yourself. But why will you be so indulgent to me, who have many to love me, and so harsh to Mary, who has nobody?"

"Is Alice saying hard things of me?" asked Mary, suddenly appearing in the opening of the folding-doors. She had entered the adjoining room unperceived, and now stood looking inquiringly from one to the other of her half-sisters.

They felt embarrassed, but Alice recovered herself and answered briskly, "I was only saying, Mary, that I thought you ought to trea us with less reserve; to be franker with us about your past."

"My past?" Mary repeated the words like a mournful echo. She sank into a low arm-chair, folded her hands in her lap, and looke straight at Alice. "Question me," she said. "I will try to answer."

Alice's thick black brows met in an annoyed frown.

"I am not an inquisitor," she answered, curtly. "You ough not to need interrogation. You should tell us of your own accor why you stayed away so long; and why—well, yes—*why* you hav returned so unexpectedly now."

"But you must not fancy that we are not happy to have you," interposed Lucy hastily.

"*You* are happy, of that I am sure," replied Mary, taking one

Lucy's fragile little hands and holding it tightly clasped in her own. "I do not suppose Bernard or Alice is. Why should they be? I can only ask them to be patient with me. Perhaps one day I may find strength and courage enough to go out into the hard world again. But just now, I cannot, oh, I cannot!"

"And you shall not," cried Lucy, raising herself from her cushions and putting her arms round her half-sister's neck. "You shall stay here unquestioned, unharassed just as long as you like."

"But I ought not to be idle; I ought to earn my living," said Mary in the most hopeless tone in which such a declaration was ever made.

"We will think of something for you to do," replied Lucy. "I daresay I shall furnish occupation for you by falling ill and requiring to be nursed. If you nurse me you will save poor mother and Alice.'

"I do not want you to be ill," said Mary with a tremulous smile.

But Lucy's words were prophetic. She fell ill the very next week and then Mary tended her with a loving devotion which won the gratitude of the entire family. Weeks passed before the young girl was able to lie on her couch in the sitting-room, and during the whole time Mary hardly left her.

When she was convalescent at last, a bleak and foggy January had slipped away to be followed by some weeks of mild weather which, in the country at all events, bore quite a smile of spring. Birds twittered in the leafless boughs, which had a beauty of their own as they shone golden brown against the translucent grey-blue sky. The pale yellow and lavender spikes of crocuses had pierced the earth in many gardens, and as one's foot brushed the stubble in the yet bare fields a lark sometimes sprang up carolling towards the boundless promise of the heavens.

"What matter that March with all its winds is ahead? The birds are wiser than we and enjoy themselves while they can, undisturbed by dismal prognostications," said Lucy, smiling up in Bernard's face, as he brought the chair in which he had wheeled her round the garden, to a standstill, and prepared to lift her out of it and carry her back to her couch. "Bernard, it is good of you to devote yourself to me this lovely Sunday morning. Any other man who had not gone to church would have betaken himself for a selfish walk and smoke, instead of stopping at home to look after a useless invalid sister. Do you see those lovely hot-house flowers? And do you know who sent them to me?"

"I know who sent them, and I think I know in whose hot-house they were gathered."

There was such an unwonted bitterness in Bernard's tone that Lucy looked at him in startled pain.

"Maud sent them. Bernard, what do you mean?"

"Of course, while shut up in your room all these weeks, little woman, you have not heard society's wheels go round."

"No, I have heard nothing. But has there been anything more

important than the usual penny readings?" Lucy spoke in a light tone, but she watched Bernard's face anxiously.

"Mr. Astley has arrived and been accepted by the neighbourhood as a great acquisition."

"And don't you like him?" asked Lucy quickly.

"To tell the truth, Lucy, I do not—and I should not like him," Bernard added in a lower tone, "even if people did not say that he is likely to marry Maud."

"Maud? I do not believe it. She would never be so mercenary."

"Mercenary, no. But, Lucy, she may like him. And you must remember"—Bernard paused a moment, then added with an effort—"that no hint at an engagement, no word of love has ever passed between Maud and me."

"But she must have seen that you loved her. And *I know* she loved you," said Lucy warmly.

Poor Bernard turned pale. It was poor consolation to hear this, now that he feared he might be losing Maud for ever.

"Think what the grinding poverty of her home has become!" he said at length. "And Major Vandeleur's perpetual laments must be very hard to bear. Unless she dislikes Astley—and most women, on the contrary, seem to like him—marriage with him probably presents itself in the light of a happy release."

Lucy sighed impatiently. Bernard was the soul of honour and generosity, but his warm-hearted little sister could not help wishing that he had been a little more impetuous and tried to win Maud in spite of poverty.

The conversation was interrupted by the return of Mrs. Weigall and her daughters from church. "Such excitement!" exclaimed the elder lady entering briskly. "The Vandeleurs and Mr. Astley were there. It is the first time he has ever been to our church, and coming with Maud. Oh! they *must* be engaged."

Bernard walked quietly out of the room, while Lucy, to divert attention from him, said: "Nobody has yet told me what Mr. Astley is like."

"Oh! a very nice-looking man, a thorough Astley, only he wears a full beard. Otherwise he reminds one very much of Robert, does he not, Mary?"

"Good gracious, Mary! what is the matter with you? You look as if you were going to faint!" The exclamation came from Alice, and directed general attention to Mary. She did indeed look deadly pale, her very lips were bloodless.

"It is nothing," she said in an odd, strained voice, but, instinctively as it seemed, as if for refuge, she drew near to Lucy, and sat down beside her couch.

"I noticed that you looked rather bad in church. And in the porch when I was going to introduce Mr. Astley to you, you walked away so suddenly, I felt sure you were feeling ill," remarked Mrs. Weigall.

"I do *not* feel ill. Why can you not believe me?" said Mary impatiently. More than this, nobody succeeded in extracting from her, not even Lucy, who yet divined that something had happened to intensify her half-sister's tragic gloom.

Meanwhile the neighbourhood was ringing with William Astley's triumphs; his hospitalities, his charm of manner, his interesting Transatlantic experiences. And the rumour of his engagement to Maud persisted, although the full confirmation of it was still lacking. From Maud herself no sign reached the Weigalls; even her visits to Lucy, formerly frequent, ceased, although she often sent flowers accompanied by a few loving words.

Rushleigh, headed by the vicar and his wife, was very busy getting up an entertainment in the school-house for objects connected with the Primrose League. There was to be a concert, a brief lecture on the Domestic Life of the Carthaginians, from Alice, and recitations from a well-known itinerant amateur. All the local talent was pressed into service, and the school-house echoed three or four times a week with rehearsals of songs, and duets, and choruses. Mary played well, and was consequently installed at the grand piano lent for the occasion by the munificent Mr. Astley. That gentleman had promised to grace the performance with his presence, and had undertaken to bring a large house-party of his own to swell the audience.

He had only been a few weeks at home, but he had already troops of friends, and among his guests was a very handsome girl, in whom the gossips of the neighbourhood saw a rival to Maud.

"If Miss Vandeleur keeps up her present show of indifference, she may lose him," said a visitor one day at Mrs. Weigall's, little guessing the throb of hope and exultation which she awoke in Lucy's heart.

"Surely Maud will not refuse him," said Mrs. Weigall.

"Hardly, I should think, considering Major Vandeleur's poverty and his unconcealed desire for the match. Probably Miss Vandeleur is only coquetting."

"Well, I suppose the entertainment to-morrow night promises to be a great success? Your daughter's aid will be invaluable, Mrs. Weigall."

"You are too kind," murmured the lady addressed. "But you remind me that the last rehearsal is to take place this afternoon, and Mary seems to be forgetting it. Ought you not to go, dear?"

Mrs. Weigall turned as she spoke towards Mary, who had been sitting silent, looking straight in front of her with the set, sombre look in her eyes which always, vaguely, made her family uneasy.

She roused herself at her mother's words, and moved wearily across the room, followed by the visitor's pitying, inquisitive glance.

"She looks suffering."

"Oh, she will recover! She is only a little overstrained," cheerily responded Mrs. Weigall with her society optimism.

The rehearsal in the school-house was over, and Mary, busy re-arranging her music, called out to the last-goer not to lock the door behind her.

Suddenly Maud Vandeleur, who had forgotten a shawl, came back to fetch it, and was closely followed by Bernard. The large room was only dimly lighted by the dying embers in the grate and by the soft diffused light of a crescent moon standing like a green sickle in a space of pearly-white sky, and visible with the stretch of quiet fields beneath it through the open door. Neither Maud nor Bernard noticed Mary, who had stooped in her dark corner to gather up some sheets of music.

"Miss Vandeleur—Maud," began Bernard in a voice of strong emotion, "we were children together and—and always friends. Forgive me if I seem indiscreet, but are you—are you intending to marry Mr. Astley?"

"What difference can that make to you?" asked Maud. Her tone sounded bitter and, perhaps aware of it, she added more gently—"to you, or to anybody outside my family?"

Mary had risen, but they were too agitated to notice her, and, perhaps embarrassed, she may have thought it better not to come forward.

"Alas! I know too well that I have no right to question you," replied Bernard, sadly. "What am I, poor and obscure, with no influence and no prospects, that I should try to control your destiny? But, Maud, if you were not the—if you were my sister, I would still urge you to prefer anxiety and poverty even to a marriage with William Astley. The man inspired me with an instinctive repulsion from the very first, and short as is the time since he arrived in the neighbourhood, I have heard things about him not to his credit."

"What things?"

"Nay, I cannot tell them to you," said Bernard. "You must take my word for it that they *are* said, and you must have faith enough in me to believe that I would not credit them lightly."

Maud gave a weary sigh. "I do not know how to act," she said dejectedly. "Father is always representing to me how good the marriage would be, not only for myself and him, but for the boys and little Trixie. Trixie is delicate; she wants so many things, and she never gets them. What would *you* say if you saw Lucy languishing for want of change of air? I am like the girl in 'Auld Robin Grey;' except," Maud added with rather a tremulous laugh, "that I have no Jamie to care what I do."

"Maud!" cried Bernard and seized her hands, then dropped them again instantly and turned away. There was a little silence, during which Maud hoped perhaps that he would say more; but he did not, and she turned towards the door at last with a suppressed gesture of discouragement.

"I—I will think over what you have said," she murmured hastily, and brushing past him stepped outside. He stood watching her as she walked away, then was preparing to follow when he felt a light touch on his arm.

"I was afraid of being shut in, or I would not have shown myself," said Mary.

"Then you overheard all we said?"

"Yes; but you can trust me, Bernard. I shall not repeat it."

That night, when Mary had finished bathing Lucy's aching brow with *eau de cologne*, she took the young girl's hand and said, in a curious, muffled voice: "Would it make you very happy to see Maud and Bernard married?"

Lucy opened her eyes in delighted astonishment.

"Happy? I should think so; but, Mary, how have you guessed their secret? You have seen them so little together; you must be a witch."

Then as Mary made no reply, Lucy resumed in a sadder tone:

"But there is no chance of the marriage. Bernard will never speak while he is poor, and he will be that until he is quite middle-aged—dear, kind Bernard. Ah, if Mr. William Astley had not existed, and Maud had inherited Miss Astley's legacy, then everything would have been so different."

Mary had taken one of Lucy's hands, and sat with it pressed against her cheek. All at once the young girl became aware that her sister was crying.

"Mary, what is it? Are you in trouble?" she exclaimed, distressed.

"I am always in trouble," Mary answered in husky tones. "It is a trouble that for fifteen long years now has haunted me night and day, draining my energy, sapping my hope, making me old before my time. I thought my heart was quite arid, that no flower of love or faith could ever bloom there again. I was so crushed and deadened that the present could offer, as I thought, nothing for which I should ever care to live. I dwelt only in the past—a cruel past. I was faithful to one memory; ah, such an unworthy one! And to that memory I should have been basely true, but for your sweetness, your loving-kindness, your beautiful courage. You have broken the bonds of my spirit, and set my trammelled soul free. You do not understand, but you shall soon. To-morrow, to-morrow, Lucy, I may still be miserable—I may be like the poor prisoner who has to learn to bear the sunlight—but you, the angel of my prison-house, you shall know that you have not lived in vain."

Mary bent over the bed and kissed her young sister fervently, passionately: then glided away, leaving the very darkness, as it seemed, still palpitating with her strange and solemn words.

The entertainment had gone off splendidly, and Mr. William Astley, quite the king of the occasion, was standing among the performers complimenting them severally and collectively.

His house-party, and Mr. Trigg, the Chillington lawyer, Major Vandeleur, the Vicar of Rushleigh and others were gathered in a smiling group beside or behind him, and, whenever they got the chance, re-echoed the great man's words.

"Charming, quite charming!" Mr. Astley repeated. "I do not know which performer to praise most. Your daughter, madam,"—with a bow to Mrs. Weigall—"sang delightfully, and all the accompaniments were beautifully played. By-the-bye, who and where is the pianist? I have not had the honour of being presented to her."

"Mary," cried Mrs. Weigall, "come forward, my love; come and let me introduce Mr. Astley to you."

"*Robert* Astley and I need no introduction," said Mary, suddenly emerging from behind the piano and moving into a clear space just in front of the guest of the evening.

That gentleman turned ghastly pale and stood with the bland smile frozen on his lips, while Mrs. Weigall, much disconcerted, exclaimed:

"My dear Mary, think of what you are saying. This is Mr. William Astley; it is nobody you ever saw before."

"I have seen him many times, and I know him only too well, for my misfortune, my bitter misfortune," answered Mary. "Ask him if he does not know me?" she continued in a louder key and raising her hand with a gesture of accusation. "Ask him if we did not meet fifteen years ago in Yokohama; if I did not follow him to San Francisco, lured on by his promise to marry me, if I did not discover just in time—ah, Heaven, just in time—that he was married already to the wretched girl whom many of you knew in the village here once as Ellen Bradley? Ask him if she be not still alive in San Francisco, hopelessly lost; his victim, yet still his wife. Ask him if he can deny all this. But no, there is no need to ask him. You can read the answer in his face."

"My dear young lady——" began the scandalised Mr. Trigg in horrified soothing tones, when he was interrupted by a harsh laugh from Mr. Astley.

"I do not see why we need stand here listening to the ravings of a lunatic," he said.

"My sister is no lunatic," interposed Bernard, firmly. "But certainly her charges cannot be allowed to pass unchallenged. Mary, try to explain yourself calmly, at any rate."

"Well, *I* am not going to stand calmly here to hear myself further insulted," cried Mr. Astley, and moved towards the exit. But Mary threw herself in front of it and faced the man she had accused with blazing eyes. "You shall stay while I denounce you as an impostor and a thief!" she cried. "I once saw your cousin William, as you very well know. He was taller than you, thinner than you, and his hair and beard were fair—that could not be seen in the photograph—and by growing a beard you have contrived, I doubt not, to look

sufficiently like the photograph to deceive those who had never seen William. But you cannot deceive me. Where is William? What have you done with him? Let Mr. Trigg here send out another emissary to America to seek for William and to bring home your wife. Let——"

With a smothered exclamation Astley sprang forward, pushed Mary violently aside, and had wrenched open the door and rushed out before anyone could stop him. Several rustics who were in the seats near the door, rushed out after him, thus preventing his guests from following as quickly as they wished. When they did make their way out, it was only to find that Mr. Astley had apparently forgotten all about them, and had driven off alone.

"No wonder, poor man! To think of that mad woman being at large," said the guests, and Mr. Trigg, and several other people. For the opinion of the majority was in favour of Mr. Astley, and Mary received many hostile glances.

But Messrs Smythe and Trigg had a shock next day, when they found that their respected client had departed furtively by the earliest train. And the shock was intensified on their learning that in London he had promptly cashed a large cheque, and then disappeared. They sent a confidential clerk to America, and, after many months and infinite trouble, succeeded in unravelling the tangled skein of the strange story.

Robert and William Astley, already slightly acquainted, had met in San Francisco on the eve of the latter's departure for Europe. William, in the generosity of his newly found wealth, had offered to pay Robert's expenses and, as he expressed it, "bring him along." By a curious, a dramatic coincidence, William had suddenly died in the train on the way to New York, and Robert had been quick to see how easy it would be for him to personate his cousin. He carried out the idea with characteristic audacity, and as his wretched wife did not even know that he had left America, he counted confidently on escaping detection; and doubtless he would have done so, but for Mary's unexpected resolution to return home.

William's death once fairly proved, Maud came into her legacy, and shortly afterwards she married Bernard, to the great disgust of Major Vandeleur and the deep delight of Lucy.

A CORNISH CHRISTMAS.

THERE is a wide breezy country in the far west whose lanes in summer are a paradise of blossom and fern ; the hedges don a royal mantle of honeysuckle, while giant fronds rise in tropical beauty by the roadside ; but the rarest and dearest are hidden like tiny emeralds in the mossy bank. There is no barrenness here ; that comes to us later when we have gained the hill-top and look-out over the silent, treeless land, where the rich hedges lose their brilliant detail and become merged in simple dark lines.

Turning into the lane again, there are forever glimpses of the wonderful sea stretching away—away—until it is one with the hazy blue sky ; or nearer, it fringes with white foam the endless chain of bays along the coast. Then, maybe, purple in the distance rises Tintagel, cloudy as some castle of romance, and over all there is such a mysterious stillness, such an absence of every-day life, that one hears without surprise the legends attached to each lonely farmstead, to every bay and tree ; for this strange vastness and silence are full of possibilities.

Such is Cornwall in summer ; in winter, giant storm-winds sweep the wide expanses ; the spirits are no longer kindly, but shriek fiercely on the blast or mock the unhappy sailors' cries as they drive them to death against the iron-bound coast ; a wild white sea dashes against Tintagel, and thunders deep in the rocky recesses, and the summit is lost in brooding clouds. Even the villages seem to nestle low under the cliffs or high green hills for protection and warmth in these terrible winters. Tregavan is an exception, however ; it looks boldly out to sea from its rocky height, braving the Atlantic storms which have left their traces on the ancient weather-beaten church, the highest point for miles in the surrounding country. The grave-stones, too, are defaced and somewhat disorderly, as though they had been blown about in "dirty" weather, but the oldest bear the names of families still existing in Tregavan, and there is a link of relationship running through all. There is a sad unanimity, too, in the record of the drowned sailors—here and there a cross over the body of a stranger washed ashore—while the sea-captains, with a due regard to discipline, even in eternity, usurp all the more imposing monuments. The best of these as well as the most recent, however, stands within, below the east window, setting forth that it is to the memory of those lost in the *Belle Marie*, Christmas Day, 1877, and the painted window above was also "given in gratitude to God by Leon Lamont, captain and sole survivor."

The stern skies are tempered by the mellow glass, and the golden lights fall in a glory on the head of Thirsa Mitchell, who sits below.

She has taken off her wet hood, and her dark young head is uncovered; it is small and well-set with a singular proud grace, but the face is too grave, almost sad, for a young woman of twenty. Her bare hands are well formed and small; though they bear all the signs of hard toil, they are brown and strengthened, not coarsened by labour. A wedding-ring gleams on her finger; she has soft dark eyes, but these you cannot see, her head is bent down, for a baby lies sleeping on her breast.

They are the poorest members of this poor congregation, but none is more attentive than the young mother, though it may be questioned if she understands much of all she hears; but her eyes, full of faith, never stray from the clergyman, unless the baby stirs or raises his plump brown fist, when she hushes him gently. They are a strange pair, the mother so young and grave, and the baby so still; even when awake he behaves with a curious sense of propriety, as if there were nothing unusual in so youthful a Christian attending service on a bitter Christmas morning.

At last it is all over, the scanty congregation files out, and while the shivering clergyman dons his thick coat in the vestry, Thirsa stands in the porch with her baby well rolled up in her warm shawl, and here she will wait, as usual, for Mr. Tressilis's greeting—the only one she will probably obtain to-day—for the little world of Tregavan looks coldly on Thirsa of late.

"Good morning, Thirsa! How is Master Leon?"

"Bravely, sir, thank you!"—proudly disengaging a sturdy hand from the shawl and holding it out.

"Ah, he's a fine fellow indeed! A bitter morning, Thirsa; you had better come up to the Rectory to dine. Mrs. Bate will be glad to see you."

Thirsa shook her head and murmured some thanks, but still she lingered.

"Any news yet, Thirsa?"

"Not yet, sir," she said, looking up with a faint smile; and as if she had only waited for this she bade the gentleman "Good morning" and went swiftly up the rocky road.

The Rev. John Tressilis turned homeward with his friend, an old college chum of years since, who still came from the warmth and ease of London life to spend each Christmas in Cornwall, and was wont to say it was the severest test of friendship the present age afforded.

"Poor Thirsa! I doubt if she would leave before I asked her for any news. She has waited all the week for that solitary bit of comfort, Anstey. I am afraid she has walked up here chiefly for that," he added. "Still, she is a good girl; it is worth all my life down here to have saved her."

"How did you save her, Tressilis? From what?"

"I believed her," he replied, simply. "I believed her, when no one else did, and I saved her from despair, which murders souls!"

The Rector's "womenkind" were represented only by his old housekeeper and two maids, so after a six-o'clock dinner the two bachelors settled down in their respective easy-chairs before a glowing wood fire in the homely library, and after recalling mutual old stories, and old times with their joys or sorrows, the Rector came round gently and naturally to his favourite topic—his church. Leaning back with a quiet smile of satisfaction he discoursed of his fine old brasses, notably that of Sir Geoffry Treffry, which is unique; of his decorated roof which he had triumphantly rescued from the barbaric whitewash, revealing all its hidden exquisite colouring, and then his oaken screen and pulpit in the style of the fifteenth century.

Looking in his face, the saddened lines of the mouth told of an earlier day when he had possibly loved and suffered passionately; but however his spirit had been disturbed in the past, it had now regained all its tranquillity and natural sweetness.

Anstey, smoking lazily with half-closed eyes, was, strange to say, neither bored nor wearied. A hard-headed, practical barrister himself, from a work-a-day world of struggling men and women, to him there was something indescribably fresh, tenderly whimsical in his old friend's genuine enthusiasm over his black oak and his brasses. Anstey cared not one jot for such-like trifles; he even entertained sacrilegious doubts as to dates, considered the evidence insufficient, and Sir Geoffry especially "shaky," which would have cut Tressilis to the heart. But these he buried in his professional breast, for he loved to listen to his friend and watch his face as he talked.

Tressilis's "set" had considered his acceptance of this Cornish living to be a mistake. He had been a man of mark among them—he was peculiarly refined and scholarly, and seemed little adapted for his rough charges; but, as he pointed out, he was already their countryman, coming from an old Cornish family. He had been successful and made himself beloved, for he was never out of touch with them, and had the rarest tact.

Anstey, sickened with the world's follies and blunders, felt his soul positively soothed and healed as he listened to the simple gentleman's gossip, the chronicle of the fishers' lives bounded by the sea line and the next village, the luck of the herring fisheries, the gales that destroyed boats and nets and even the fishers themselves.

"It was one of those terrible gales about two years since that brought such mischief to poor Thirsa—I suppose that is why I think of her so much to-day. To be sure! It was Christmas Day two years ago. It is a strange story," he went on. "We had very dirty weather about that time I remember; heavy gales, and a tremendous sea on, and it was on Christmas night surely, when the coastguard came up to tell me there was a vessel ashore in St. Cleer's rocks, just below us here; a narrow cleft in the huge wall of rock. It was a marvel how the wretched vessel had driven in; when I got there she was crashing and bumping, first one side, then the other, as the great seas rolled

and roared against her. She was a complete wreck, we could see that, as well as some of the unhappy men still clinging to her as the rockets flashed into the night. The lifeboat was of course useless in such a case. We tried to get a line on board with rockets, but failed. She rolled so fearfully, struggling in her death-trap, that either we missed her, or those on board did not know how to make the line fast and use it. It was terrible to see her by the fitful lights going to pieces, and to hear at intervals above the wind and sea the shrieks of drowning men, and we could do nothing. A few went down the rocks in the faint hope of finding some living creature washed there. All our men and women were out above; they all turn out for a wreck. I went down too. I tell you, Anstey it was like going into the mouth of the inferno—the pitchy darkness, the unknown slippery rocks, the awful crashing and shrieking, the wild sea surging below. Suddenly I heard close by a woman's cry for help; I shouted back as well as I could in such a gale, and made my way in the direction of the voice. Some of the men came down just then, and we got a light for a moment and found Thirsa crouching on a narrow ledge of rock overhanging that mad sea and dragging from its white teeth—it seemed its prey—a drowned man! She had hold of him under the arm-pits, and so excited was she, and so tightly were her hands clenched about him that we could scarcely unlock them to take him from her. He was apparently quite dead, and bearing him between us we went slowly up the cliff; we took him to the inn where there were great fires made and hot coffee ready for the poor fellows, but alas! he was the only one rescued from that wreck.

"Prideaux, the little doctor, was there, and looked at him when we laid him down; he shook his head as he felt the heart.

"'Too late, I'm afraid—he's a fine fellow too, and has fought hard for his life—we'll give him a chance of course.'

"And the usual remedies were at once tried, but brought no sign of returning life. At last very reluctantly they desisted; there was no hope.

"Thirsa had been standing back unseen in the shadow; at this juncture she suddenly came forward.

"'Let me try, sir! I can bring him back—I can—I can indeed, sir.'

"The doctor was putting her aside roughly until I explained how bravely she had saved him from the sea.

"'No use, my good girl; we can do nothing more, the poor chap's dead; go home and get some rest yourself.'

"'Do let me try, sir, she persisted, wringing her hands. 'I know I can bring him back; his life is mine—I saved him—he will hear me, sir; do let me try!'

"He turned away annoyed at her wilfulness.

"'Oh, aye! try then if you like, you are an obstinate lot, you Cornish; you can't hurt him, that's certain; the poor lad's dead right enough, as you'll find.'

"Having wrung a permission from him she next insisted on being

alone; the doctor was nothing loth to leave the dim room for the blaze and comfort downstairs; he withdrew with his assistants; but I lingered at the door half-unwilling to leave a young girl alone in such circumstances; not that she was hysterical, or even excited now, but extraordinarily calm and confident. I had hitherto known her only as a wild, dark-eyed girl living alone with her grandmother, who was reputed to be a witch; to-night she had suddenly put on the dignity of womanhood.

"She evidently thought herself alone; she approached the dead man, took both his hands in her own, and began a low wailing chant. I recognised an old Cornish charm for drowned sailors; the weird monotonous rhythm was accompanied by a curious 'drawing' movement of the hands, as though she would draw his life to her; it was even as you would fan a flickering flame. I closed the door softly and went down."

"I should have thought you would have felt obliged to protest, Tressilis, when it came to magic and the black arts."

"I never interfere with their fancies," he returned gently; "they will soon die out unopposed; none are seriously evil now—many are beautiful; they have a strong hold in the hearts of the people; they are older friends than I. I am careful in supplanting them. However, I am wandering, as usual. Now, Anstey, you will scarcely credit what I tell you, but when I went back to that room in half-an-hour, the girl was half lying on the pillow, the man's head on her bosom, their hands locked together, and both sleeping as sweetly as little children!"

"It is marvellous," said Anstey, fairly surprised by the other's impressive manner. "How do you account for it?"

"It is unaccountable with our present knowledge; only there was something beyond our skill in this woman's love and faith, stronger than death, and the will that would not let the life she had saved slip back into darkness again. I left them undisturbed and went down with my strange news to find Prideaux. I must say he did not take it at all well; he swore a good deal and seemed much disgusted. However, Captain Lamont mended rapidly; we never found any traces of his crew, and the vessel was smashed into matchwood. The pecuniary loss did not seem to trouble him much, though he was also the owner, but he bitterly mourned the brave fellows he could never replace. He had some notes of considerable value about him in an oil-skin case, and was thus enabled to stay on comfortably at the village inn until the spring came round; he was a general favourite, especially with the children, for whom he made all manner of curious toys, or told them tales of wonder and travels in his queer broken English. I liked him as well as the rest; he often walked up here in the evenings, and as he made his cigarettes and smoked, he would tell me all his troubles. These were nothing very serious—a doting mother, somewhat arbitrary, who thought to control him, a grown man, by holding the purse tightly and keeping him at her apron-string.

"She was the widow of a wealthy shop-keeper; they had been originally very poor people, but frugal and industrious; at his father's death Leon had broken loose from his mother's irksome restraint, and gone to sea; that was about five years before the time he was thrown among us. After his second voyage he bought a small vessel for himself, the ill-fated *Belle Marie;* he had inherited a small sum on his father's death, but the bulk of the money was enjoyed by his mother for her life, and, strangely enough, she had the power to will it away from him if she chose; she seemed, from his account, to abuse her position and continually menace him with disinheritance, and I could read how her threats galled his proud spirit.

"Leon had written to his mother, assuring her of his safety and his miraculous escapes, but still he stayed on in our quiet village, unwilling perhaps to lose his freedom, his brief holiday; but most unwilling to leave Thirsa.

"Their love for each other was remarkable; it was so natural, so complete; they were always together, like twin children, and, indeed, it seemed as though the life Thirsa had saved and claimed as 'her life' were indeed a part of her own. When I found things were in this case I spoke to Leon, suggesting he should write to his mother, telling her all and asking her consent to their engagement or marriage, and to bring Thirsa home to her. I saw the reply, a hard and ill-advised letter; she had other views for him, and desired his betrothal to the daughter of an old neighbour. She concluded by demanding his immediate return to fulfil her wishes.

"He brought the letter up to me with cheeks aflame, and, as was excusable in a young lover full of defiance, a spark would have kindled a flame of rebellion. Now you know, Anstey, I am a thorough man of business, so I began by putting things to him in a practical, common-sense way. As he had lost all his means they, the young couple, would be dependent on her goodwill; it was not worth while to lose such a pretty fortune through petulance; it would give his wife an easy life and spare him the chances of seafaring. Later on I tried to show him the consideration he owed the mother who had loved and laboured for him through his youth; it was at least advisable he should go home at once, and he would doubtless gain her consent when she found his happiness was involved. I did not feel any scruple on the score of Thirsa's humble parentage and defective education; the Lamonts had an equally obscure origin, and Madame Lamont's letters and mode of thought showed me her lack of education and refinement; Leon was certainly a fine, generous-hearted young fellow, but of no especial cultivation; so I had no fear Thirsa would trespass on any gentle prejudices; though simple she was not vulgar. To my mind there was nothing to separate them but the great gulf of money, and this I thought Leon's love should bridge.

"He bade me farewell the next day, though he had not arranged to

leave until a fortnight later, but I was off to Truro for a month's visit; when I returned he was gone: and from then to now we have never had any sign from him.

"Thirsa went about merry enough for the first few months; she did not expect a letter, I daresay. They do not write much, about here, and though I wondered we had no news I would not make her uneasy. As time went on, however, she drooped and grew pale and thin, and eyed me wistfully when we met, like some suffering dumb thing.

"I felt linked to her by my knowledge of her story and my friendship for her lover; I tried to win her confidence, but I fancied she avoided me. Then came the saddest part—the village folk began to look askance at her, and one day my housekeeper told me in her stiffest tones that 'degraded, shameless young woman, Thirsa Mitchell, wished to see me, and she was nigh upon death since her little son was born that morning.'

"I was thunderstruck; poor, childish Thirsa! I was full of grief for my blindness, my carelessness. I hastened to the cottage, for whatever had happened, what sin or folly, I felt I was heavily responsible for this young creature. Now I knew the meaning of the innuendoes, the shrugs and sighs of late when Thirsa had been mentioned; they had passed me unheeded.

"The cottage was small and poor, but had always hitherto been kept scrupulously clean and bright; to-day it looked forlorn and miserable; the old grandmother was brewing an evil-looking mess over the dying fire, and upstairs I found poor Thirsa very white and weak, alone in the bare cold chamber with her wailing baby beside her. She knew me, though I could see she was desperately ill; she moved her parched lips and made a sign for drink; there was none. I went down and got some water, which she drank eagerly. Then she laid awhile quite still, evidently gathering her strength for some supreme effort; she drew at last from her bosom a bright new wedding-ring on a ribbon; this she held up to me with trembling fingers. I understood her meaning in a moment; it flashed on me like an inspiration—she was married already to Leon; secretly, while I was away at Truro probably. He had begged her, for his sake, not to divulge it until he had won his mother's consent—and she had been faithful, poor girl, to the hurt of her good name.

"I took it from her.

"'My dear,' said I, answering the mute agony of her eyes, 'I know all you would say if you could speak—God tells me for you; I understand everything, but you must not hide this any longer, for the sake of the little son; you will injure him if you do not wear it and take your right place and name; let me put your wedding-ring on for you—Thirsa Lamont.'

"I placed it on her finger and laid her baby on her arm, but she held my hand fast until she fell asleep.

"Thirsa got slowly better; I managed to get a good nurse for her,

but she remained weak and listless for a long time after. Prideaux came round and helped us, saying, in his grim way, she had better have left things alone, and this was all she had got by her interference. The old women shook their heads and croaked that those you save from drowning are bound to do you an injury. And in short, Anstey, no one believes the girl's story but myself."

"How do they account for the ring?"

"Oh! they do not accept circumstantial evidence if it is unpleasant. She cannot, unfortunately, remember where she was married; it was in some large town, and they went by rail and then took a steamer. The grandmother was an intolerable old woman, and persecuted Thirsa shamefully; of course she had borne a very bad reputation herself in her younger days, and was peculiarly spiteful. She died and released Thirsa from her tyranny when the child was three or four months old, and from that time the mother and child began to thrive and pick up, the cottage became neat and bright, and Thirsa went back to her old life with the self-reliance and self-respect you have seen. She has told me the knowledge of my belief in her made her braver to face the curious, unfriendly faces; she would have fled, but for that, to some town, and probably to ruin. With her baby in a shawl at her back, she first went down to the beach again, buying her fish from the boats as they came in; she takes these to the country houses in a donkey-cart; the little one now sits in it sturdy and brown, with a green branch from the hedges, while she walks beside: you may meet them any day in the lanes. In winter she knits—they tell me she knits on Sundays; I am pained by their want of common charity, and I believe it to be scandal; but if she does, there is the bread to be earned, poor thing! She lives alone except for the baby, who goes everywhere with her. The people would have forgiven her by now if she had owned her disgrace, but of course she cannot do so, and will not be received on sufferance, and claims her position, so the breach is still open."

"Do you think he will return now?"

"She believes it—but I doubt it," said Tressilis sadly; "and yet I cannot think him so infamous; I am sure he rang true, Anstey, and had an honest heart. Perhaps he has met his death—there are so many chances in this world. We are brought continually face to face with the strangest——"

He stopped to listen, for there was an unwonted sound of wheels, and a loud knocking at the door, curiously audible, for the wind had dropped and it was a quiet night.

The housekeeper entered visibly flurried and with a pale face.

"A gentleman, sir—I think it is——"

But pushing past her the visitor entered unceremoniously, a stalwart young man, browsed and dark-bearded, holding both his hands out eagerly.

"Lamont!"

"Mr. Tressilis! What can you tell me of Thirsa? What can you think of me?"

The time went by unheeded in mutual explanations; it was an hour since the strange guest came; he glanced at the clock impatiently.

"I must go—I must see her—my wife! Will you come with me, Mr. Tressilis?"

But Tressilis shook his head, smiling.

"To-morrow; I will walk over to-morrow with Mr. Anstey," he said.

As they stood at the door to see him off, the moon shone brightly in the clear sky, and the Christmas bells began to ring in the old turret; there was a glow in each cottage in the village below, for none was so poor but it had a Yule log or "mock" kindled on the hearth.

"What a sweet peal it is!" said the Rector lovingly, with his head on one side. "Listen to that, Anstey! It looks like a frost," he added, as the gig wheels echoed crisply on the road. "Why, bless my soul, I have forgotten the baby!"

And so he had, and was surprised into language of unusual strength by such an omission; there had been so much to explain on Lamont's side, that the Rector may be pardoned for forgetting such an interesting circumstance.

It was indeed an odd story, a veritable chapter of accidents. Anstey doubted if anyone could be imposed on by reading such an account; but to hear the man tell it, to watch his emotional southern face and glowing eyes, was to feel its truth.

He had stayed with his mother for several months, trying vainly by all gentle means to gain her consent, and during all this period he wrote frequently both to Thirsa and Mr. Tressilis.

He admitted, with a flush, there was now no doubt but his mother had tampered with the letters and stopped them. He naturally wondered why no replies came, and at last he could endure the suspense no longer, and told his mother all—even his secret marriage to Thirsa—and his determination to return at once to England. She passionately forbade him, and refused to recognise a marriage which would in France be illegal without her consent; she swore if he brought his young wife home she would brand her with disgrace; there was a furious quarrel, and he hastened his preparations to leave her for ever.

Before he could start he was struck down by fever, for which his past anxiety and excitement had ill-prepared him, and for three months hovered between life and death, wasted to the extreme of weakness by frequent relapses. The medical men ordered a long sea voyage, as soon as he was in a fair way to recovery—to Australia, trusting the fine air and quiet life would complete his cure. He protested he must return to England, and begged to see his letters.

Then, turning her head away to avoid the sight of his anguish, his

mother told him with strange gentleness Thirsa was dead, and his journey would be unavailing. She had destroyed Mr. Tressilis's letter, she said—the sad news had come when his fever was at its height, but she gave him—without looking in his face, the bright wedding-ring which she said had been taken from his dead wife's hand. Leon had told her so much of his story, and the confiscated letters supplied other details, so she wove her tale with perfect plausibility. She was very tender with him, and he was so weak and helpless he laid his head on her bosom and cried like a little child again.

A week later they started for Australia. In his first sharp sorrow the monotony of a sailing vessel seemed unendurable, but he gained strength daily; they made a short tour in Australia, seeing the chief cities and the country hurriedly. Madame Lamont tried vainly to interest him, and they were both well pleased to turn their faces homeward. She too seemed listless and unsatisfied, even when she gained her home, and never resumed her old interests or active life. She had greatly changed, and watched Leon continually with a glance, half jealous, half fearful, and waited on him with painful assiduity.

Chastened by his own grief, he became very tender and forbearing to her as she slowly failed, until one day he found her lying in her favourite seat in the garden, with her face all drawn and grey, and he knew the end had come, before the old doctor pronounced the case hopeless. It was a question of a few hours only; she would never regain speech.

All day she laid with wide open eyes—thinking of what?—and Leon watched her, holding her hand. At evening she raised herself slightly, pointing to the wedding ring he now always wore.

"A lie!" she whispered in a hoarse strange voice. "A lie—forgive!"

In a moment he had guessed her sin, and the cruel wrong done them. He instinctively recoiled from her, but the mute look of agony in her eyes touched him, and, with a tumult of love and pity in his heart, he bent down and kissed the mother who bore him, and so she died in peace.

Thirsa was standing at her cottage door, the narrow road ran beside her little garden, and beyond stretched the shining sea, rippling softly in the moonlight.

She, too, had heard those Christmas bells, and throwing aside her knitting, had come to listen to their music which called to her strangely through the night.

"A happy Christmas; peace and good-will, good tidings—good tidings—a happy Christmas!"

Well, Christmas had come once more, with its fair promise, but had yet brought her little happiness; still one day the "good tidings"

would surely come, for she saw no shadow on her love's truth; and as the bells rang out, her brave young heart, full of love and hope, answered them as clearly—"A happy Christmas, and peace and good-will to all!"

A faint sound came out of the silent night; nearer and nearer down the road, the regular beat of a horse's hoofs, the rolling of wheels, fantastic shadows in the moonlight, all whirling merrily along, as in a dream, until they stopped at her gate; and the strangest vision of all, the form of one risen from the dead, leaped down. But she was taken into warm living arms, and held safe in their strength, and all her wild tears of joy kissed away.

"You have changed, too, love!" he said, holding her away from him a moment, but never letting her go. "I left you a slim slip of a girl; you are a beautiful woman now, my wife!"

She nestled closer to him.

"This has always been my heart's home," he went on, "and it is all as I have pictured it. Ah! many a weary time, all the same, unchanged. There the hives stood in summer, and the rose-bush grows—I have the last rose you gave me in my breast. There is the seat where we sat together; and is my old chair still in its place?"

And he looked within.

His chair was gone from its nook in the chimney corner, its place usurped by a cradle with a sleeping baby! In his chubby hand he held the little toy his mother, in spite of her poverty, had bought him, mindful of his Christmas; he had played with it all the evening, and now had fallen asleep with it in his arms.

Lamont started, looked at the child, then to his wife. Smiling, she took his hand and led him proudly to the cradle.

"This is our boy!" said she.

And then he took her again, closer to him, kissing her with a new love and reverence, for she was the mother of his son!

A WAYSIDE CALVARY.

Low in the glory of the west
  Calm lay the fleecy amber bars ;
Home went the weary ones to rest,
  And, one by one, came out the stars.
The tall, dark poplars by the stream
  Stood out against the rosy sky,
Which threw its tender, lingering gleam
  Upon a wayside calvary.

The village murmur rose and fell,
  The maiden's song so low and sweet,
The sound of holy vesper bell,
  The children's laughter in the street ;
Whilst, on that lonely wayside shrine,
  Back from the quaint old hamlet's din,
There hung that Form of love divine
  Who saves poor souls from guilt and sin.

There came a man with silvery hair,
  The scars of fourscore weary years
Upon his face. His lowly prayer,
  Baptised with penitential tears,
Rose to the Form that hung on high
  Against the slowly dying day :
The pilgrim felt that Heaven was nigh,
  And passed in peace upon his way.

With gentle step a maiden came,
  All clad in maidenhood's sweet grace ;
Low murmuring her loved one's name,
  With sinless blush upon her face.
She humbly knelt upon the ground
  And spake to Heaven her simple prayer ;
Until at length sweet peace she found,
  And left her fears and sorrows there.

The full moon rose behind the hill ;
  Its beams lit up the Saviour's face ;
The sleeping land around lay still,
  And no soul sought that lonely place.
At last there came with wavering tread,
  Her bosom filled with vague alarms,
A woman fair, with grief-bowed head,
  Her child of sin within her arms.

Amidst her loud and anguished prayer
  The babe awoke with feeble wail ;
When lo ! throughout the moonlit air,
  Clear trilled a tuneful nightingale !
It seemed a voice from Paradise
  That sang of her dark sin forgiven ;
She rose with hope throned in her eyes,
  And in her heart sweet thoughts of Heaven.

ALEXANDER LAMONT.

LETTERS FROM SOUTH AFRICA.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "In the Lotus Land," etc., etc.

Carhaix. *July*, 1893.

CARE AMICE,—The picturesque syllables of Bloemfontein fell upon our ears; a welcome sound. The night journey had been long, and the most willing guard in the world could not make it otherwise than tedious. Now and then a jerk over a badly laid rail, or stoppage at an infrequent station, disturbed our light unrestful slumbers. We looked out upon the blackness of darkness perhaps only to see a gaunt, solitary signal post looming in the darkness, stretching a portentous arm over endless plains, as though bidding us pass on into the night and the for ever, and be heard of no more. It looked indeed the "lone, lone land." Wide plains that seemed unending, over which, in the night sky the stars flashed with intense brilliancy, yet gave no reflection. Then the break of day, when light faintly dawned and crept over the earth like a moving mysterious spirit; an influence before which all things of evil fled; every moment disclosing beauties of sky and colouring. Next the pleasant break at Kronstad, where we had a glimpse of South African life both in its colonial and native state; where the copper-coloured children ran naked, and the mothers bestowed liberal chastisements, which the little urchins treated with sublime indifference, and seemed to look upon as part of the day's diversion.

We pictured Mrs. S. in the midst of this strange life, so opposed to all the refined appointments and possibilities of her English home; to which surely nothing could reconcile her but the happiness of beholding the long unseen face of a beloved son. We looked out upon the handful of houses snugly reposing on the plain, surrounded by trees and gardens: an earthly paradise. Near them ran the Valsch, where fishing and boating is a great resource; a stream adding much to the beauty of the little town. And we passed away from it all and steamed onward through the wide, flat, far-reaching plains of the Orange Free State, where countless cattle grazed, and a world of land awaits cultivation, and below the surface lie inestimable riches.

We were glad to come to an anchor at Bloemfontein, and change the scene. After a long sixteen hours' journey it was good to lose the ceaseless clang and jar of the train. The station is large and imposing, one of the best in South Africa, where they do not go in, as a rule, for miles of platform, and wonderful roofs supported by marble columns, and Directors' Board Rooms with Watteau ceilings, and gilded cornices, and 15th century Persian rugs—those rare dreams

of colouring and design. They have not yet accomplished these luxuries in South Africa, as we have in England.

The station was fairly crowded, and we wondered whether it was a market or a fair day—and hoped it was not; for these events are only interesting to those immediately concerned; everything and everbody else they disorganise. We soon discovered that the town was in its usual peace and repose, bordering upon stagnation, and the crowded platform was an everyday occurrence, of which the mainspring was curiosity. It was something to see and do, an object for going out. The arrival of the train was a great event, bringing a flash of life and excitement to the sleepy little settlement: a change of human faces and human tones; the earnest of an outside world of activity, of great aims and ambitions; a vast hurrying population of whose existence one might well begin to doubt in this quiet neighbourhood.

The little crowd was concentrated upon the platform. We passed out of it into a new world of comparative desolation. An omnibus took charge of our fragments of luggage—the greater part of which, you will remember, is going about the world in detachments: perhaps at this very moment setting off the dusky beauty of a South Sea Island squaw. The hotel was not far off, and after sixteen hours in the train we preferred to walk. The road was white and wide, flat and straight as an arrow.

From the first moment we felt there was a lightness about the place conducive to cheerfulness. Perhaps it was as well, for we found little else. In a comparatively new country everything must be more or less after the same pattern. The beauty of time and age has fallen upon nothing—and here in the ages to come will have nothing to fall upon. Of this you warned me; somewhat ruthlessly comparing the experiences of South Africa with those we went through together in Cairo: placing such dream monuments as the Mosques, the Tombs of the Caliphs, the Pyramids, in contrast with the modern element of this new continent. But it is not always May even in travelling, and in visiting new countries we must be content to sacrifice that which most appeals to us—the Wonders of Architecture, the Beauty of Decay. There will be no resurrection of the old days; the Feudal ages with their wonderful influences are dead. This extinction of charm is one of the signs that the world is really growing old. At the end of the 19th century we have fallen on debased times. In the ages to come our century will be looked upon as the Ultima Thule of all that was barbarous—supposing that Beauty and great things should ever revive. But we have enjoyed one advantage not possessed by those who have gone before, or by those who shall come after: we have seen the great monuments of the Middle Ages at their best; when the hand of Time was placing his final touch upon them; when the charm of age was most apparent, veiled in all the pathos and loveliness of things about to pass away. In how many is not the charm even now diminishing? Alas, a thing of beauty is not always a joy for ever!

We found nothing of all this in Bloemfontein : no charm of form, no refinement of decay. But as the syllables are picturesque and suggestive, we somehow expected more from Bloemfontein than from any other place we visited, and if we were disappointed we were only going through a very ordinary experience.

Lightness and brightness were its characteristics, chiefly due to atmosphere and blue skies ; and perhaps to the aspect of the houses, for the most part red or white ; some of them like painted zebras. In the brilliant sunshine it was rather dazzling. The town lies on a high, wide plain, which stretches for miles around. For this reason it is considered especially healthy, and many invalids come to Bloemfontein as a last resource, and are able to live here when they could not live at home. To us, it is rather a mystery ; one would suppose the irritation set up by the sand-storms fatal to delicate lungs. But facts are stronger than arguments, and it is certain that many partially recover and live on to old age.

A quiet, uneventful existence, where one may go to roost at cock-crow and rise with the sun. The town is so small that it resembles a large village. From a rather unpicturesque square four long streets run out to the four points of the compass. But even these thoroughfares have a rustic look about them, an appearance of country lanes. There is a general impression of houses standing in gardens encircled by waving trees and flowering hedges ; but it is all very subdued, as if its inhabitants had retired from the world, or were all in the sere and yellow leaf, or had lost their energy. In our wanderings we passed up and down the white roads, some of them lying between sandy banks above which stood the houses and gardens, whilst in other instances they were as much below the road—and we might have been monarchs of all we surveyed ; once or twice the sounds of a piano let us know that inhabitants existed and were not all sleeping, but they made no other sign.

Yet it has its importance, this Capital of a Dutch Republic. Its people are beginning to realise that there is a world beyond the Orange Free State, and they must awaken to play their part in it. Of late it has made strides : many churches, colleges, schools and religious institutions have sprung up. The Roman Catholic element seems to have made efforts in South Africa, and here they are also evident. Bloemfontein has long been the seat of an Anglican Bishopric, and the Cathedral very much resembles that of Pretoria : small and low, with a dim religious light about it, but remarkable only for its atmosphere of repose. On Sunday the service was well attended, and quietly performed. Bishop and Dean were both away on their travels.

Many of the congregation looked delicate, and the reason of their presence in the town was only too evident. It is not given to all to recover. Some linger on for a year or two, and then quietly pass away to the Land o' the Leal, their journey soothed, their sufferings diminished by the light atmosphere. It also has the effect of buoying

BLOEMFONTEIN.

them up with hopes that, though sometimes false, are always sweet and always good to possess. Despondency and depression are very difficult here. In this land of blue skies and sparkling air and sunshine it is almost impossible to realise that death may be hovering near. Man forgets that he is mortal. The healthy and strong feel they can never grow old; youth is eternal; whilst the delicate fancy every new day an improvement upon the last. This, we repeat, is good; a merciful illusion, which one morning changes to reality. Yesterday the sufferer thought he was getting quite strong and well; this morning, looking at the bright sunshine, the calm blue sky, suddenly the end comes; eternal youth has indeed set in.

Such a story we read on more than one face that Sunday morning in the little Cathedral: none seemed more unconscious of it than the invalids themselves. The day was hot and brilliant; sunshine poured down upon all; the white roads were dazzling and dusty; the little stream flowing through the town sparkled as it ran with a cool refreshing sound; round about the Cathedral the trees waved and stirred with the faintest possible murmur, as the breeze touched them. Their shadows fell upon the long low roof. A stranger preached. The sermon did not resemble the day—it was not brilliant, and if tedious it was at least earnest—a virtue which atones for a good deal of mental shortcoming. All was over and the congregation streamed out and dispersed, looking as if life were a pastoral symphony to be leisurely played through, in which discords were unknown. It was surprising how soon they scattered and disappeared, leaving no traces but the dust of the road.

In its awakened condition Bloemfontein has built itself new Houses of Parliament: a handsome building. The town is the seat of Government and the Law Courts. Having an introduction to the President we called upon him. His house is large and substantial, built of stone: the most imposing Presidency we have yet seen. To pass from the hot sunshine and glaring white roads into large cool halls was delightful. The Dutch element reigned more than elsewhere in Bloemfontein. Simplicity seemed the rule of the house—simplicity which always charms. In a large, delightful room, whose leading feature was space, because there was no unpleasant crowding of chairs and tables, we took tea. The quiet maid-servant was Dutch, as Dutch her master—or of Dutch extraction. As she handed the tray, she asked each one in broad Dutch, which sounded quaint and singular, "Kop o' tay?" and met with no refusals that hot afternoon. It was emphatically the cup that cheered. All reminded us of days gone by when we had visited Holland itself, the picturesque little country so near our own shores; where amidst new friends, now become old and true friends, we found the same simplicity side by side with the refinements of life; ladies who were the intimates of Royalty and danced with the King; who delighted you with the strains of Beethoven, and wonderful sketches of nature;

yet looked carefully to their best china services and assisted their maidens in household mysteries. But this simplicity, the delight of life, is seldom seen, and few realise how much is lost.

Bloemfontein itself seemed less Dutch than English. English appeared the prevailing element, perhaps because we saw so few interiors. There was an English atmosphere about the Free State Hotel: a curious building taking up very much of one side of the square, evidently enlarged at different times. Wide and straggling, its back premises looked upon another world: the running stream, and fields and stretches of country beyond—the vast surrounding plains of Bloemfontein. From the front of the hotel one saw all the life of the place, such as it was. Before us the club, sole literary harbour of refuge; the hotel did not cater for the intellectual needs of its guests, and had not even a reading-room. In the centre of the market-place was an erection which might be a village pump-room, orchestra, or small market house. Here on the quiet Sunday morning the Salvation Army endeavoured to create a sensation: the fragment of a band struck up a series of discords which set all the dogs of the neighbourhood howling, and made all the peace-loving, music-loving inhabitants truly wretched. The army seemed unpopular in Bloemfontein. After blowing and whistling for half-an-hour, it performed a final shriek, and followed by a severe-looking female in green spectacles, and a child, marched off in offended dignity to the sound of a big drum.

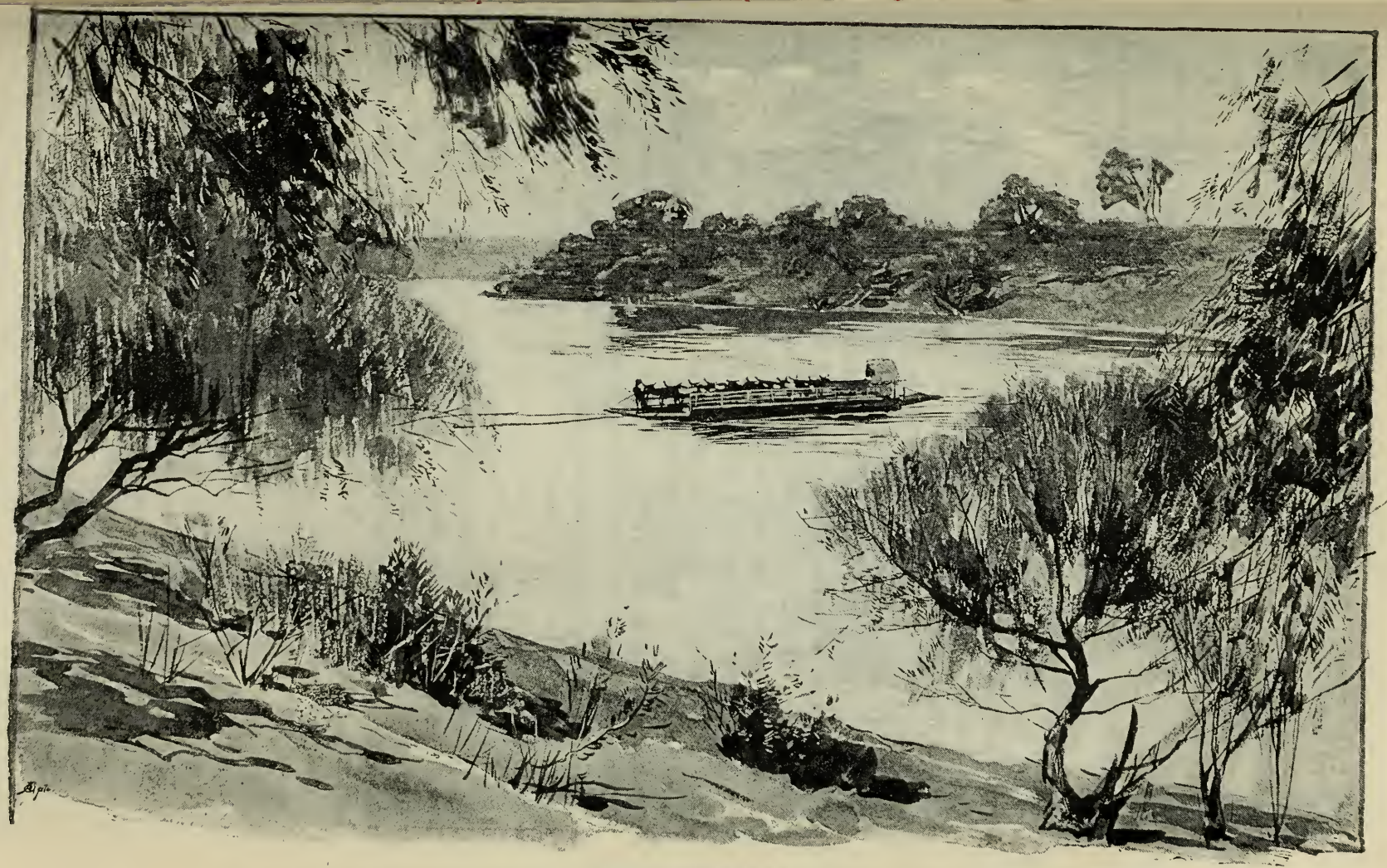
There was quite a small crowd of people at the hotel, chiefly consisting of a theatrical company that, at dinner, occupied a large and select table to themselves. Ladies in "patches, paint and powder" reversed the order of things, quaffed the gentlemen in sparkling wines, and drank to each other's success in love and war. All evidently felt that a Colonial life was intended to be free and easy, and it was their duty to uphold the traditions of the country. They were travelling about, living a career of change and variety so pleasant to those with backs fitted to the burden. Its very uncertainties have their charm. What can be so inspiring to hope, than the prospective full exchequer of to-morrow as a set-off against the empty certainty of to-day? And romance often steps in and adds its interest and glamour to the scene. The old tale is ever being retold, varying slightly in detail, perhaps, but the same in its broad outlines. The ladies and gentlemen of the company, many of whom have gone through the experience, suddenly notice that they have an Edwin and Angelina amongst them. The real drama of life runs side by side with the sham drama on the stage, until marriage puts an end to the excitement, and the heroes fall into the commonplace. It all looks very pretty on paper; the fool's paradise is very sweet whilst it lasts, and in a few cases its fragrance never dies. There are lovely flowers that bloom for ever, and melodies that never cease.

On the whole Bloemfontein left on us the impression of a quiet

sunny place, where life may pass untouched by hurry and care, and those who are not strong may escape the race for wealth; a large wholesome village with some of the advantages of a small town. The ecclesiastical influence is strongly represented by the mitre; the President adds to its dignity; the Law Courts and Houses of Parliament contribute their mild intellectual excitement, and help outsiders to pass away the time, which too often runs "with lingering steps and slow." The fine air brings healing on its wings: the hue of health frequently returns to the "pallid sorrowful face." Where it is not so, the downward passage is a question of degrees, of imperceptible changes; line upon line, here a little and there a little. The whole place is bright; if it had a fault it was the absence of all shade. Even now in autumn, most of the houses seemed to keep their shutters closed, to remain cool and dark within, for few houses were built like the Presidency. It was from behind these shutters that we heard the strains of music, to which we listened like the Peri at the Gate of Eden.

We had to leave all this quiet charm. It was Sunday afternoon when we turned our faces towards the railway station. The day had been full of the "Sabbath stillness," which everywhere distinguishes the Day of Rest in South Africa. We found no exception to this golden rule. Even the ladies and gentlemen, whose business it was to go through life acting a part, had been a shade less hilarious at the mid-day table-d'hôte: and if paint and powder were a little more conspicuous in the garish daylight, whose business was it to object if they did not care? True, when dinner was over, they went off in small detachments, having apparently hired all that Bloemfontein could produce in the way of conveyances. The ladies, resplendent in gauzy robes and flowing frills and flounces, glittering with jewels, seemed to disappear in a series of sun-flashes. Their destination was mysterious. Asking our hosts for information, we were told that there were serious thoughts of founding an Agapemone in the neighbourhood of Bloemfontein, and they had gone to inspect a special spot. But it was a mere rumour, that probably would come to nothing.

It is abundantly evident that there was nothing very much to detain us in this little Free State Capital, yet we left it with regret. As we turned towards the station, we saw stretched across the sky in large letters: *The Beginning of the End.* But it was more than this; it was almost the end itself. Nothing but a long journey lay between us and Cape Town. We should have to sleep one night on the road, but as far as we knew it would be a halt without "experiences," for we arrived after dark, and left at daybreak. So we felt rather sad and sorrowful. This having to leave a place too soon is often a drawback to travelling. New scenes that charm, new friends that delight, are about to pass out of our lives, probably for ever. Everything is steeped in that halo that surrounds the beautiful and the unfamiliar; the atmosphere is all couleur de rose. What possibilities



In the Transvaal

are we leaving behind? What chances of friendships that might brighten the future?

Not that this was altogether our experience in going through South Africa, though in most places we should have been glad of a longer stay. One likes to grow at home with even uninteresting places, unless they are, like East London, altogether beyond the pale of civilisation. Especially we regretted our inability to penetrate further into the interior. H. wanted his turn at big game. If he did not wish to reach home in the lion's skin, he at least would have liked to take one with him: whilst we felt that the discovery of an hitherto unknown race or unseen Niagara would confer honour upon England, and be a fitting conclusion to our travels. It was not to be, and no one knows what posterity may have lost for want of a little time.

The railway station could not be included in the Sabbath stillness. Again it was crowded, and there was a certain eagerness upon the little sea of faces, as if all were expecting the arrival of long-lost friends. It was nothing but the excitement of the coming train. When it arrived it was very full. We had a journey of thirty hours before us, and a separate compartment was absolutely necessary to endurance. Yet there was not one vacant carriage. In despair we besieged the station-master, and whispered a powerful name. He was the kindest and politest official we met in the whole of South Africa. "It shall be done," he said, and calling the guard he gave his instructions. "Impossible," replied the guard, looking extremely dejected. "Then perform the impossible," returned the station-master. And somehow it was accomplished, and made every difference to a long and tedious journey. As the train steamed out of the station the crowd still looked on, but all the eagerness was gone; the event of the day was over, and they might return to their quiet ways.

Our journey was long and uneventful; but we resign ourselves to long journeys and the hours pass unconsciously, whilst they can only be tedious to the vacant mind. New scenes give their constant charm, and our present journey had no lack of interest. We were passing through the great Karroo country, a vast tract in the Western and Midland Provinces of South Africa.

The Karroo is a small stunted shrub overrunning the plains, not for miles but for hundreds of miles. In summer it is burnt up, looks brown and withered. The whole country far as the eye can reach is desert-like and barren. Great black patches meet the eye as though burnt by fire. Between are spaces of sandy waste. Few trees are visible, and these are of the acacia species: Doornboom, as the Boers call them. Even these are usually seen only on the banks of the rivers, whose dry courses they help you to trace. The shrubs of the Karroo country are bushes from five to eight feet high, varied with smaller plants one or two feet high. When the summer heat has passed and rain comes, the whole face of the country changes. The black and burnt patches disappear;

brown leaves turn green; new leaves shoot forth: the young plants are covered with beautiful flowers. Bulbous plants are common, and sometimes spring up and bloom afresh after being apparently dead and withered for three or four years. A fortnight after the rain has come the rivers are running and singing for joy; the desert has suddenly become a fruitful wilderness. There are times when an apparently arid plain will suddenly blaze out, as if on fire for hundreds of acres, with the beautiful flower of the compositæ: here a glowing red, there a brilliant purple; whilst above them, weird and ghastly, the white and withered branches of dead shrubs spread their long lean arms. Many flowers are beautiful, but the compositæ are the most abundant in the wonderful Karroo country.

The mountains rising here and there are bare and rocky, as though nothing had ever grown upon them or ever would grow. Wild ravines cut the plains, and seldom is the pleasant sound of running water heard in their depths. In winter the sheep feed upon the shrub, and many parts of the Karroo are vast sheep-walks. Even in summer, when the shrub looks brown and dead, they manage to exist upon it until better days set in. The country, apparently so desert-like, might be made abundantly fertile; where it has been cleared it yields rich returns, in spite of the danger of long summer droughts. The average level of the Karroo district is about 3000 feet above the sea. Its mountains occasionally rise to 5000 feet, but some of the peaks of the Zwarteburg range rise over 7000 feet.

In the tropical regions of South Africa they are higher. A mountain chain 10,000 feet high will slope so gradually to the sea, that its surface is diversified by rivers and valleys. There are great tracts of bush country in these tropical regions; the pasture-land is rich and the grass luxuriant. But how different, how much more trying the warm moist climate, which is produced by the currents of the Indian Ocean. Yet how magnificent the forests, how varied and abundant the flowers.

The air upon the high Karroo plateau is light and dry. In summer the unclouded skies look molten and glowing; a faint haze veils the horizon. The prevalent winds are the north and north-west. They have passed over the desert, and are of the nature of the simoom. Clouds of red dust accompany them; their heat is tremendous. But they soon depart, and do no great harm. Thunderstorms sometimes clear the atmosphere; storms England knows not of. The whole sky is one blaze of lightning, the whole air one sound of rolling thunder, the rainfall a deluge. In a few hours vast tracts of country become as lakes; dams burst and rivers overflow, and great damage is done. But these are the chances of life in South Africa. As a rule, overwhelming misfortune does not come; the evil has generally its remedy; life on the whole is prosperous.

Winter in the Karroo is delightful. It is the great time for invalids, yet few seem to realise the fact. For six hours of the day the sun

shines as it does with us in summer. There is a delicious crispness in the air. Man seems gifted with wings; his feet scarcely touch the ground as he walks. Fires are only wanted in the evening. The nights are cold, but not too cold: and in this dry atmosphere the cold of winter brings no shiver even to sensitive frames.

For the same reason the great heat of summer is not oppressive, excepting for the short time the north wind blows. The air is singularly pure and free from any floating matter; it is full of ozone, rarefied and clear; whilst in winter its stillness may be felt. Those who live here for a time revel in a sense of freedom and expanse impossible to describe. Earth appears boundless as heaven. The mind responds to the influence, and all narrowing influences seem withdrawn for ever. Life is not a rush and a scramble. The race for wealth is a mere expression, unknown, unrealised. The daily annals of existence are fine broad outlines, noble and dignified. There is a grandeur in these surroundings, and we ourselves must be responsive.

The summers, owing to the extreme dryness, are less trying than might be supposed. It is the damp tropical heat which kills. Here, in the Karroo, there is none of that painful experience. No doubt the drawbacks are considerable, but they are not overwhelming. The heat brings languor and loss of appetite; the winds when they blow are hot and laden with dust; exercise can only be taken very sparingly. The houses suffer from want of ventilation. All day long doors and shutters are closed to keep the interiors dark and cool: and what the rooms gain in one way they lose in another. When the sun goes down doors and windows are thrown open and you breathe more freely; but the daily experience of a shut-up house is trying.

At present the resources of the Karroo are limited, but the day will come when it will be a great invalid resort; a boon to the world; a delightful health-restoring sojourn; summer and winter having each its charm; summer on the mountain heights, winter in the plains. Thus the work of restoration may go on uninterruptedly in the same air—a great matter to an invalid. To change the air during the process of recovery is often as great an evil as changing your doctor; progress is arrested, ground lost. Life here may pass very pleasantly. In summer the whole day may be spent in a shady verandah, or in a hammock slung between trees. When the sun goes down, exercise may be taken; whilst in winter long walks are both possible and delightful. Food is generally cheap and good, but suffers from a want of variety. "Always a feast or a famine" is a South African proverb especially applicable to the Karroo: though supplies never quite fail. In these "tinned" days, too, one may easily cater for a regiment in a desert; the empty cupboard is a bygone dream sacred to Mrs. Hubbard. Houses are chiefly built in the plains, but presently they will creep up the mountain sides. The

future is full of resources; of things to come; of wonders and miracles of life. The world grows younger every day.

Through such country we travelled hour after hour. We left Bloemfontein in the afternoon, and presently the sun went down, and we passed through all the glories of sunset. Night fell and the stars

TRAVELLING IN THE OLD DAYS.

ame out with that lustrous brilliancy that in this wonderful air gives hem a singular look of suspension, as though they were orbs of quid silver simply floating through space. Then once more came unrise changing the wide plains into life and colouring, flooding the kies with gold.

The day wore on, and again night fell. Hungry as hunters, we

longed for Matjesfontein, where everyone dined. The fame of its refreshment-room has spread throughout South Africa. We looked for a banquet choice and rare: fish and flesh and fowl and fruit. Again it was a Barmecide feast. The master was away, and the men had taken the favourable opportunity of indulging in strong waters, and with fixed insane smiles placed empty plates before us and handed us empty dishes. At first the passengers thought it a little impromptu comedy, silly and out of place, and when they found their error, the language some indulged in was far more suited to tragedy. It was rather a cruel disappointment, especially to those on their way to Cape Town, with a long night journey before them.

Ours was nearly over. At eleven o'clock we reached Touw's River, and here stayed the night. Few lights were on the platform, and the darkness was Egyptian. No one else left the train. Blinds were all down, lights were shaded; the carriages looked dark and sleeping and mysterious. On the platform we found a forlorn young man bound for Bloemfontein. He appeared one of those not destined by nature to knock about the world; seemed rather lost and bewildered as he fixed his melancholy gaze upon his luggage under the flickering solitary oil lamp. We somehow felt for him; there was a gentle atmosphere about him not in keeping with those who have to "rough it in the bush." He looked at us rather appealingly; and the look seemed almost a supplication to take him under our wing and restore him to the green pastures of his native England. Then as in a dream, he moved towards the train and was about to open a door. Something prompted us to say, "Where are you bound for?"

"Bloemfontein," he replied, in tones as repressed as his look was melancholy.

"But this is going to Cape Town, away from Bloemfontein."

"I came from Cape Town yesterday," he dreamily said; "but I felt ill and sad and got out here—such a funny place—so depressing—and have managed to exist for twenty-four hours. The station-master told me the next train coming in would be my train. This is the next train."

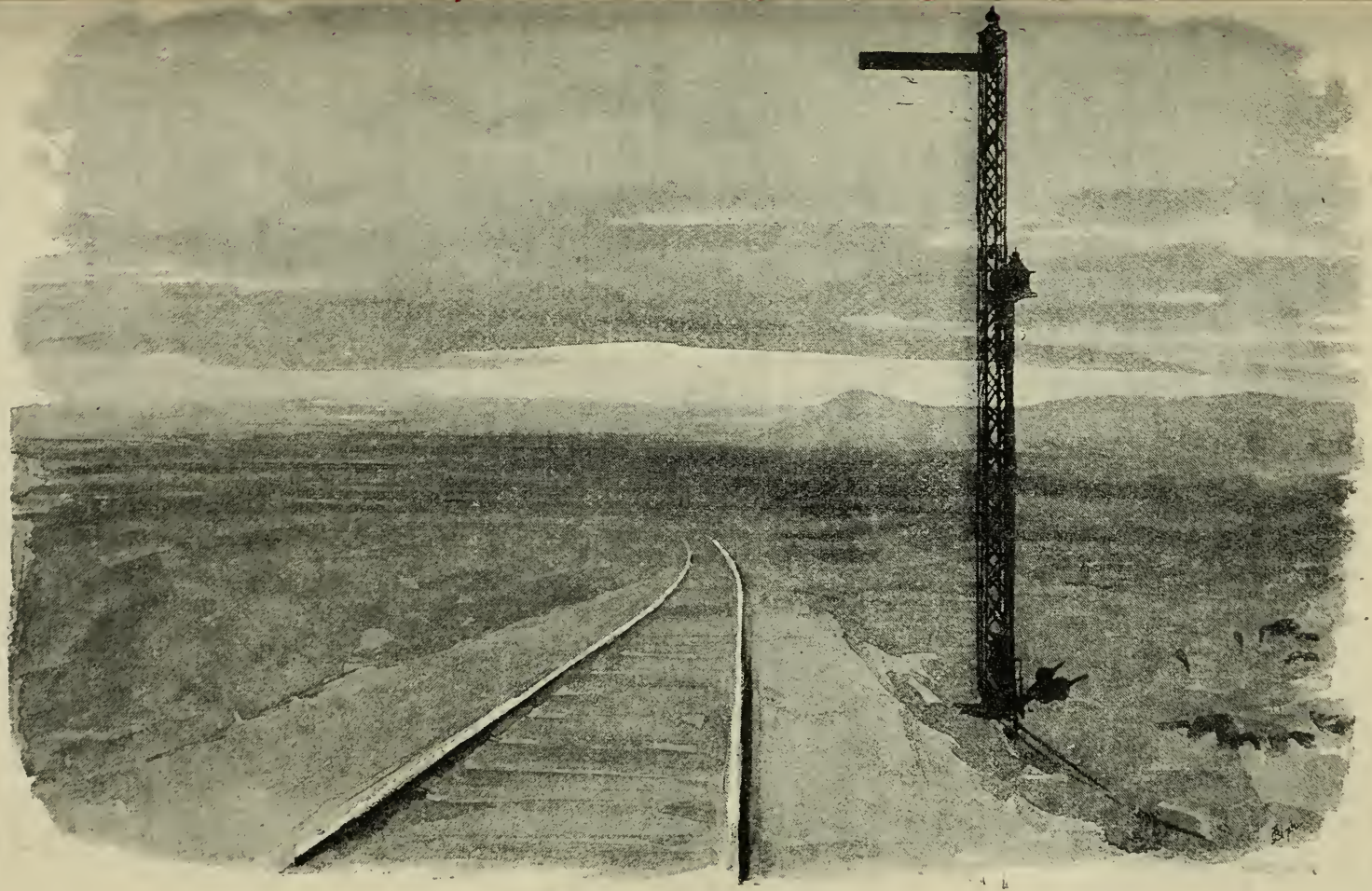
"The next train coming in the other way," we returned. "The station-master concluded you would understand that. This would only take you back to Cape Town."

"I shouldn't much care," he said. "They told me I must come out here for three or four years; said I couldn't live in England; but I think I would almost rather die at home than live in this exile."

"Take courage," we answered. "In a short time you will think differently. Bloemfontein is a pleasant little place. You will make friends there; health will return; at the end of three years you will want to make it your home."

In about ten minutes the Cape train moved out, the Bloemfontein train came in, and we saw him comfortably placed in an empty compartment.

"Good-bye," he said, holding out a thin white hand, and smiling



THE LONE, LONE LAND.

for the first time. "You have quite brightened me up. I feel more hopeful. Couldn't you manage to change your plans and go back to Bloemfontein? It would be such a happiness."

As this was indeed impossible the train steamed off without us. We were left alone on the platform. Light streamed from a window, and we made for it—the bar of the little refreshment-room. The station-master—who was also hotel-keeper—stood behind it, counting out his money, like the king in his counting-house. He looked up startled. "Lost your train?" he cried. But we assured him that we were not such bad travellers. We were staying here the night in order to go through the wonderful Hex Valley by daylight. He was very civil and obliging. "Well, sirs, I will do my best for you," he said. "You will find it rather rough accommodation, but clean and wholesome. Would you like some tea before turning in?"

"We should indeed, and something to eat with it," we returned. "At Matjesfontein the waiters had taken too much, and no doubt the cook also, for we dined off empty dishes."

"Poor fare for hungry travellers," he laughed. "When the cat's away—you know the rest, sir. Mr. Logan's in Cape Town on some business of his own. A very particular man, is Mr. Logan, and won't he be wild when he comes back and hears what's happened. I expect those waiters will find they have taken their last carouse in Matjesfontein—at their master's expense."

The next person to appear upon the scene was an old woman; not so hideous as the one that had given us nightmare at Pietermaritzburg, and not sable; but an eccentric character nevertheless. With an expression that would have been dangerous accompanied by a carving-knife, she took up a candle and bade us follow her. We did so, not exactly through halls of Eblis. First a long room, with every mark about it of recent occupation—scattered chairs and empty glasses. Then a kitchen, whose presiding genius was preparing us refreshment. Then the open air, and darkness made visible by the rushlight; weird shadows flitting about like giant bats. On went our conductor, with a determined step. "Look where you walk," was all the caution she gave us, as we blindly stumbled upon a plank stretched over a yawning precipice. The plank was twelve feet long, one foot wide, the precipice might be 5000 feet deep for all we could see of the bottom. All the dreadful stories we had heard of wayside inns rushed to our memory.

"Prepare for danger," we whispered to H. "Armed to the teeth," he returned, grasping the hilt of his Norwegian dagger, just as he did that first night in the Cape Town Avenue.

After what seemed an interminable journey through space and darkness, we reached another building and were ushered into an enormous room, which looked innocent enough. No sign of trap-doors or panelled walls. "This is all new," our duenna condescended to explain, and now that we stood face to face, her ferocity

seemed to evaporate, and quite a kindly look came into her eyes. "South Africa is growing; we must grow too," she briefly continued. "Capital rooms; all good seasoned wood. Off to-morrow morning, I suppose, to see the Hex River. I've seen it a hundred times; quite sick of it. Must call you at daylight. Mind the precipice as you come back for your tea."

A caution we did not fail to observe. Yet when we reached it, the old woman loomed out of the darkness like a startling apparition. She had waited to pilot us across in the goodness of her old heart. Evidently there was to be no work to-night for the Norwegian dagger.

Nevertheless our night at Touw's River was an experience which left behind it a weird and curious impression, perhaps because we arrived in darkness and left it with the first glimmer of dawn. To us it was a land of shadows. We saw nothing but outlines. All interiors were bare and uncomfortable, our bedroom excepted. We felt at the ends of the earth. Nothing was civilised excepting the station-master, who atoned for all shortcomings. No wonder the poor invalid for Bloemfontein had found a twenty-four hours' stay depressing. And yet by daylight we should probably have found much to interest us.

The next morning arrived too soon. The old woman was true to her word, and before the shades of night had dispersed beat a veritable devil's tattoo upon our door. H. from his far-off corner sprang up, shouting, "The soldiers are on us!" He was dreaming it was another Zulu war. We bridged the precipice safely and found that the good old creature had prepared us a capital breakfast. How different from our experience at East London, at Standerton, at Johannesburg. Then the train came up, and we said good-bye to Touw's River and entered upon our very last journey in South Africa.

It was a fresh and glorious morning. The sun had risen, the sky was beautiful with many colours. There was no sign of mist in the sparkling atmosphere. Soon we reached the Hex River Station, from which point began the wonderful scenery; the descent of the train into the Hex River Valley. We had seen nothing to approach it in all our South African wanderings. Probably South Africa has nothing elsewhere to compare with it, and it possesses the merit of being accessible, for a few hours from Cape Town will take you through all. After this—travelling upwards—the country changes to the comparatively flat and commonplace, and remains so right on to Bloemfontein and Johannesburg, as though Nature had exhausted itself in one grand effort.

The way to enjoy the scene to perfection in going downwards is to have a chair placed in front of the engine, which has a rail running round it for the purpose. You then have everything in front of you. Perhaps to us the wonders seemed a little exaggerated, for in all our previous experiences, from the day we left Durban, we had never

once seen anything to raise any great emotion. On reaching Hex River Station, the train was apparently upon the summit of a mountain. On the opposite side was another chain of mountains. Between the two chains lay wide-spreading valleys. We gazed into immense depths, and asked ourselves by what magic the train was to descend to their level. Gradually it made way. Zigzag paths seemed to flash here and there, as if lightning had struck them into existence. Along these the train slowly, slowly wound its way, like a serpent creeping cautiously to its prey. Sometimes round a sharp curve the carriages almost seemed to double upon each other. Very gradual was the descent. Often we appeared to be almost overhanging a precipice: the advance of another yard and over we must go. Then a sudden turn would open out a fresh zigzag and again slowly, slowly we made way: a very little way with each fresh zigzag. The very engine seemed to have a sense of danger and responsibility. A steady head and a straight course were necessary. It did its work well.

We had seldom felt so great a sense of vastness and space. The depths of the valleys seemed distant and intangible as a dream. A river ran far, far below. We saw it flashing in the sunshine, but could hear no sound of flowing waters. There were precipitous mountain sides; huge walls of barren rock; and others again that sloped more gradually, and were green and smiling. As we descended, so the mountains literally appeared to rise upwards, as though they would presently reach the clouds. We could not think them immovable as they had been for ages past. The scene was really sublime.

Nearing the level, we found care and cultivation; fields and orchards; picturesque farms, the homes of happiness and abundance, surrounded by waving trees, and gardens where flowers bloomed in gorgeous colouring. Down, down, down, until at last, the descent was accomplished, we hardly knew how, the train came to a standstill at Hex Valley Station. We drew a breath of relief that it was over; we gave a sigh of regret that it had not still to come. The one experience was not sufficient; we wanted twenty experiences. Half our mental impression had been absorbed in wonder and suspense.

At Hex Valley we stayed awhile as if the engine as well as its human freight must have breathing-time to recover from all this emotion. It was a very pleasant halt. On the mountain the air had been fresh and keen; in the valley it was warm and balmy; everything was luxuriant, emphatically sheltered from the world. The east wind might blow above, the north bring its sandstorms, they could not penetrate here. So it felt and seemed.

But the train at last went on and we with it. Valleys and mountains were left behind; the solitary short experience raising a great unsatisfied longing, was over. Once more we passed into the vast country of the plains: though more diversified by hills as we approached the region of Cape Town. Stations occurred more frequently; life

and activity became more visible; many farm-houses: those picturesque, snow-white houses with jet-black roofs, that stand out so conspicuously in the landscape. Lovely baskets of fruit were offered us at the stations, for which very modest sums were asked. We were evidently approaching enterprise and civilisation.

In due time we entered the plains of Stellenbosch. Rising before us in a vast, magnificent amphitheatre, were the wonderful hills with their jagged and peculiar outlines, reminding us a little of the still more irregular Dolomites. Immediately we again saw as in a dream the pleasant day we had spent with the Dutch minister. It seemed quite far-off, so much had we seen since, so far had we journeyed. We saw once more the wide streets with their

Hex River Valley.

ancient and spreading oak trees, many no doubt flourishing when the town sprang into existence two centuries ago, and was named after its first Dutch governor Van der Stell, and his fair Dutch wife Mademoiselle Bosch. Again we saw the flowing streams which enliven the town and make musical the air; the white-walled churches, surrounded by spreading branches that overshadow the windows, and give to the interiors the dim religious light supposed to attune the mind to devotion. Once more we sat in the minister's Garden of Eden, and beneath his own spreading branches luxuriated in piled-up dishes of grapes that even Caleb and Joshua might have carried off as specimens. The train slowly steamed into the station, and we looked out, almost expecting that some mesmeric influence would bring the

minister to the platform to greet our return and give us a God-speed on passing away for ever from these distant latitudes. We searched up and down, but not even his ghost was in attendance. Our human possibilities are limited. Nothing met our gaze but the jagged mountains, beneath whose shadow he was probably even then reposing. We steamed away again with a great regret. That Arcadian day we had spent would never repeat itself: that special Paradise to us was closed for ever.

We passed into the immediate suburbs of Cape Town, Table Mountain loomed up in the distance, and quite a homelike feeling crept over us as we once more traced its curious formation. It seemed a year rather than a month since we had seen it slowly disappearing as we stood on the decks of the *Dunottar*. There rose the white Observatory in which we had spent so pleasant an evening, gazing upon the wonders of the starry sky. One after another familiar scenes and objects opened up. We traced the path we had taken round Table Mountain in that memorable Victoria Drive. Beyond that turning, out of sight, lay the rich vineyards of Constantia, the wonderful cellars that year after year groan with the burden of their delicious freight. We remembered all the wealth of Nature all the magnificence of the rocky coast, all the clear pools filled with exquisite sea anemones—everything that had charmed our first days in Cape Town. In the wide plain between us and the mountain the town slept, a huge cluster of white, flat-roofed houses, where life, compared with the fever of Johannesburg, passes in a very even tenor.

Finally the train entered the station and drew up at the platform. Our travels in South Africa were over.

It was not without regret that we once more found ourselves in the wide uneven streets of Cape Town, with nothing between us and England but the long sea voyage. We had seen much, but we had seen it hurriedly, and for want of time had left many things undone. Still it had been a very pleasant experience. The very next day we were to sail homewards.

We spent the remaining hours as such hours always are spent; in returning to old familiar spots for a farewell gaze; in saying good-bye to friends newly made, but not for that reason to be forgotten; in visiting shops and buying up curiosities of the country: horns and feathers, and skins: a hundred things that presently become white elephants leading to repentance. In her old familiar bearings lay the *Dunottar*. Everything about her looked in a state of suppressed excitement and expectation. Cab after cab kept drawing up laden outside with piles of luggage, with eager travellers anxious or hopeful, according as the world fared with them. Some were returning millionaires who had gone out with pockets lightly weighted. With others it was just the other way. They had not been born with their stars in proper conjunction. *La main heureuse* is not given to all, as we have already remarked. "Have nothing to do with an unlucky

WINE FARM, CONSTANTIA.

man," said the founder of the House of Rothschild, of which numerous family he was certainly not a member.

Everything about the *Dunottar* was in a state of activity; the gangways were besieged; to us it was a depressing influence, a farewell to repose, a return to the commonplace elements of life. Nothing was improved by the fact that the vessel was *coaling*, and everything was adorned with a charming layer of black dust. But even that sable ceremony came to an end, like the hours of the last day.

At ten o'clock, when darkness had fallen and the stars were out, the final word was given; gangways were withdrawn, ropes slackened, slowly, slowly we moved away from the quay. The lock gates were opened, and as on a memorable night we had passed in, so now we passed out for the last time. A tremendous shout went up from those on land, echoed by those on board. It was a last good-bye. The lights of the town and the harbour shone out as we receded. Dimly the gigantic outlines of Table Mountain loomed up against the dark night sky. The good ship was fairly under way; South Africa was a thing of the past. As we stood on the bridge—our old spot—thought upon thought crowded upon our memory. Presently eight bells rang out—a new day had begun.

And it was a new world we were leaving behind us. A world of inexhaustible industry and wealth, full of capabilities and resources, where by-and-by almost the impossible may be compassed; such an El Dorado as never yet existed. It is not easy to overrate the future of South Africa. The land is flowing with milk and honey, and neither America nor any other country has possessed in such abundance the elements of permanent prosperity. The Argentine Republic ought to be great and wealthy, mighty and powerful, but her foes are they of her own household, and she must await "A New Republic" that will turn from the evil ways of the old. Then she too may become great. South Africa has none of this to contend with. She is honest and upright, and if she is only true to herself—as no doubt she will be—presently she will grow into a mighty power towards whom the gaze of the world will turn with envious admiration. Much of Europe seems to be growing old; over-population appears to be journeying hand in hand with diminishing resources—a *vice versâ* state of affairs—and it may quite possibly be that South Africa is destined to be the future antidote for this great evil. It is at any rate certain that whilst the whole civilised world has been suffering from a disastrous commercial crisis, she has steadily progressed upwards, her days and years marked by advancing prosperity. Her people have every reason to be happy and contented, for they are laying a good foundation for the time to come; for the sons and daughters of posterity who shall grow up as young plants and polished corners of the temple.

All seemed clearly mapped out before us as we stood on the bridge of the *Dunottar*, and the good ship ploughed through the smooth waters

of the ocean, and eight bells proclaimed midnight and a new day. Above, the stars shone brightly and seemed to shed down their benediction upon the land whose outlines we could still faintly trace; and the earnest wishes for her welfare that we silently wafted upon the quiet air only helped to swell the volume of aspirations ever ascending for that desired end—a consummation devoutly to be wished.

Then up came Captain Robinson and scattered our thoughts to the winds, suggesting that star-gazing after midnight was destructive to

WINE CELLARS, CONSTANTIA.

the "hectic flush of health." But he did not practise what he preached; for we fell into a train of argument, and two bells struck and four bells struck, and still we stood upon the bridge; and the stars travelled westward, and the Southern Cross went down and the Southern Crown passed upwards: all steadily moving onwards like the lives of care-encumbered men. And every moment the good ship was taking us further and further away from this Land of Promise. Not for us these developing resources, but for a younger generation, and for generations yet unborn.

Our voyage was not destined to quite uninterrupted prosperity. On a certain day there came strange sounds from some part of her

machinery. Disguise it as they would, we read anxiety on the faces of the Captain and Chief Engineer. Then a whisper went abroad that there was a screw loose somewhere. These words are often spoken metaphorically in life; on this occasion they were to be taken literally. It was soon known that the screw of the *Dunottar* had gone wrong: her blades were loose.

One morning something happened. We had entered the Tropics; the heat was intense; we wondered whether we should live through it. For the first and only time we had forsaken the bridge and were lying in our deck chair in the stern of the ship. There the faintest suspicion of air came to us. We were alone, all the passengers having scattered; some to attend the daily auction, some to music, some to flirtations in quiet corners; some to soda and brandy, draughts taken regularly throughout the voyage at fifteen minutes' intervals as a precaution against low spirits.

Our chair was immediately over the screw. Suddenly there came a shock that shivered through the vessel; a report after which the dead silence was appalling. We were simply hurled out of the chair by the mere force of concussion of the nerves. Passengers hurried to and fro, pallor and agony upon their faces. One lady fell into hysterics, and only recovered to fall into them again at half-hour intervals during the day. The engines were stopped, and there came that dead silence and stillness which at sea seems like the suspension of life itself. A boat was lowered; the Captain, Chief Engineer and their satellites went round to examine the state of affairs. It was found that one of the blades had gone to the bottom of the sea. The concussion was caused by striking the side of the vessel as she wrenched away. The good ship had stood the blow and was none the worse. But the other blades were loose; she might not stand another blow; and though she did, if they all came off we should lose our power of motion, and have to toss about the Tropics until help came to us. If it never came we should have to sail about for ever like another phantom ship.

It was a serious and anxious moment. We were put down to quarter speed, and went through the Tropics at a solemn and funereal pace. The "Tropical agony" was proportionately prolonged, and day after day we seriously asked ourselves if we should live to see another sunrise. And this was the voyage supposed to be bracing to jaded nerves. Then there was the hourly suspense, wondering how the screw would behave, listening for another shock which should sound like the crack of doom. There were strange sounds in the neighbourhood of the screw; inequalities, irregularities in the workings; ominous bumpings which told of increased loosening of the blades. Every morning it was no longer the polite inquiry, "How have you slept?" but a hurried, anxious, terrified, whispered, "Did you hear the screw in the night?"

Finally, one Sunday morning we came to an anchor at Goree, the

port formed by the land of Cape Verde—the port of Senegal. It was an intensely hot and glowing day. We almost felt as if we were in the centre of the sun itself. No one had even energy enough to use a fan. In front of us, a mile or so distant was the island, its parched shores looking beautiful and green and cool and refreshing to our sea-accustomed eyes. There was a very Dutch look about the harbour and the houses upon the rising hill; a wonderful tone; everything seemed steeped in a glorious golden haze: "Quite a 'Clara Montalba' effect," said Captain Robinson. From the distance it looked like fairyland, not like an earthly scene; here one might bask in eternal sunshine, and eat the lotus flower. It was a divergence from our course, but one never to be regretted. It all now seems to us as a dream, the more so perhaps that we only saw it from a distance.

Captain Robinson and a few others in authority went ashore; and after a charming visit on land, to which the passengers were not admitted (it would have been difficult to land 400 people in small boats), they returned with a diver and some of the great people of the place, habited in swords and cocked hats. I do not mean to imply that they were cannibals and wore nothing else, in spite of the Tropical heat. The diver was a man of colour, but also a man of energy. He dived without apparatus, and stayed under water for a good three minutes, tightening a screw; then came up to breathe and went back for another three minutes to tighten another screw. And so he went on for a long time, until all the blades had been tightened, and there seemed every chance of their now holding.

After a halt of some six or eight hours we continued our journey; still at half speed. Nothing more happened. In due time we reached Madeira, and went through all our old experiences. And here, as the good ship sailed again on her homeward way, letters and telegrams were placed in our hands, and their burden was sad and sorrowful. One near and dear had fallen ill and counted the days and watched and longed for our return: only to pass out of life even before we touched Madeira. In our imagination the vessel for the remainder of the voyage was draped in black and the ensign was half-mast high. The eyes of a brother most dear and most beloved, ever wont to light up at our approach, had closed for ever upon the world. Again with cruel force rang out in our ears the saying of the wise Eastern king: THIS ALSO SHALL PASS AWAY. But the good ship went onwards, unmindful of the sorrows of mankind. In due time the white cliffs of old England loomed up, and the *Dunottar* steered into the beauties and shelter of Plymouth harbour. Here nearly all her passengers forsook the vessel, but we preferred to go up channel, pass into the Thames, and part from her where we had first joined—at Blackwall. Arrived at her destination, she steered slowly through the docks to her moorings, and we bade her a long farewell.

I am writing to you from a remote little town in Brittany. In

some ways it reminds us of South Africa, excepting that here we have a few traces of old-world architecture: houses with wonderful roofs and windows and gabled ends, which drive one distracted and make one long for days of leisure and the pencil of a Turner. But they are only occasional, and the general aspect of the place is somewhat new and fresh. Our inn is delightfully primitive. Only a short time ago and it did not exist. The walls are still damp, and a scent of fresh mortar yet clings to them. Everything is of snow-white purity. Our host and hostess are very unworldly and unsophisticated. It seems impossible that they can ever have wisdom enough to make both ends meet. The good woman is huge and clumsy, a true *Bretonne Bretonnante*, with a very alien French accent, but honest and straightforward as the day. We have to rough it here quite as much as in any place in South Africa, but it is charmingly quiet; there is no disturbing element, no aggressive human influence. It is not many days since we landed in England. We have fled to our beloved Brittany, partly to refresh ourselves with a little old-world life and architecture; partly to escape from sorrow. We are haunted by the sound of a voice that is stilled; by eyes looking and longing in vain for our home-coming, and closing for ever in the "pain of unfulfilled desire."

We have had a long day's drive through lovely scenes in the heart of the Morbihan; blue skies and clear air and many pine trees have surrounded us; perhaps this is one reason why to-night we are specially haunted by our South African experiences, which seem to pass and repass before us in a series of panoramic pictures. If there was anything in those experiences that jarred it is forgotten; only the pleasant remains, and over all is spread the gentle glamour that ever surrounds the past.

Care Amice, as far as South Africa is concerned, the pen falls from the hand. But many details and the conclusion of the whole matter are reserved for that day when we shall meet "face to face and clasp hands close and fast." To that end advance the hour, for we live in a world wherein we know not what a day may bring forth, and it behoves us to remember the going down of the sun.

THE BODKIN LETTER.

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

IT was a letter addressed, "Signor A. Bodkin, Poste Restante, Florence," which arrived one morning in that interesting city, and was placed in the second pigeon-hole in company with the other B's to await the claimant. The claimants turned out to be two. When the hour of distribution arrived, and all the people, native and foreign, who choose to have their letters left in the post-office instead of having them delivered at their houses, and they are a good number in Italy, entered the large square court and gathered round the window of that department, a tall young Englishmen of fair ruddy complexion, with dark hair and dark grey eyes, pushed forward impatiently. The official, who was serving the public in a leisurely manner, took no notice of him, and the people who stood round gave him to understand that everyone must wait his turn. In the meantime another young man, who was before him and closer to the window, asked for his mail. The clerk threw out a letter on the marble sill which serves as a bulwark to keep the public at a little distance. The young man was about to seize it, but the tall Englishman, who read the address over his shoulder, stretched out his arm and laid a large forefinger on the letter, saying—

"Excuse me, this is mine."

"But, no, signore," said the Italian in apparent surprise. "It is mine. Look at the name!"

And he turned the letter towards the other, but held on to the end of it.

"I see the name, signore," returned the Englishman with a pleasant smile. "It is my name."

"Bodkin!" exclaimed the Italian—pronouncing it *Bodkeen*—"it is my name."

"There must be some mistake, signore, or you are jesting. No Italian ever was born with that name, and very few Englishmen. In fact it belongs to only one family in the United Kingdom, an Anglo-Irish family. I dare swear that there is not another man in Italy called Bodkin."

"*Caro Signore mio*, excuse me, but the name is mine. I am Amedeo Bodkin."

"Impossible, my dear sir, impossible!" exclaimed the Englishman with an incredulous smile. "This is an elaborate pleasantry," he added relapsing into English, "and I want my letter."

At this point the clerk, who had been listening to the dispute and neglecting his duties, said:

"Let me see the post-mark," and took the letter in his hand. "It has the head of her Majesty Queen Victoria, and is stamped London. Are you from London, signore?" he asked of the Englishman.

"No, but I have correspondents there."

"And I also," said the Italian; "I have some friends there."

"That letter is mine; give it me, please," said the Irish Bodkin, growing irate.

"It is mine, and I insist on having it!" said the Italian Bodkin with corresponding heat.

"What proof can you give of your identity?" asked the clerk of the Irishman. "Have you any acquaintance in the post-office who will recognise you as the Mr. Bodkin?"

"*Bodkin*, not *Bodkeen*," corrected the Irishman. "I am a stranger. But here are my visiting-cards, and a letter received at Milan."

"This letter," said the clerk, with the solemn air of a judge on the bench, "is addressed *A. Bodkin, Esq.*, while the one in the dispute is *Signor A. Bodkin*."

"Oh, that means nothing; some of my friends write *Signor* because I am in Italy."

"And have *you* any acquaintance here to prove your identity?"—to the Italian.

"Not in the post-office, but I have been in Florence three weeks and I have been here before for letters."

"I do not remember you. I cannot give this letter to either of you gentlemen until you bring someone to testify who you are."

And he replaced the letter in its pigeon-hole and attended to the patient Florentines who had been kept waiting for a considerable time. When the litigants saw the coveted epistle disappearing from view, they became very angry and stormed at the clerk who, safe behind his official bulwarks, only smiled at their rage, and proceeded with his business. They were pushed away from the window by the crowd, and then they turned on one another. The Italian, gesticulating with his small brown hands and speaking in a very exciting tone, insisted that the letter belonged to him, and he would bring evidence enough to procure it. The Irishman stood on the uniqueness of his name; he would not consent to the idea that anyone could bear it except one of his own stock, much less a foreigner.

"The Bodkins of the County Galway are *the only* Bodkins in the Kingdom—in the world. Of course they have multiplied and scattered somewhat in the course of ages, for they are a very ancient race. There is a popular song which says,

'The Bodkins sneeze
At the grim Chinese.'

which serves to show how well known is the long descent of the family."

The Italian, though still angry, could hardly suppress a smile, for

he knew English well, and they had dropped into that language when they found themselves *tête-à-tête*.

"Your family may be as old as the deluge, and you may have a right to sneeze at Noah, if that is the custom of your aristocracy; I do not dispute your pretensions, sir; I am not interested in genealogy. But what I do know is, that I have a perfect right to the name; I have come by it honestly, and I shall not surrender it at the bidding of any man."

"Sir, do you mean to insinuate that I have not a lawful right to the name of Bodkin?" demanded the other.

The Italian shrugged his shoulders and spread out his hand.

"I know nothing whatever about you."

"I do not expect you to know about me or my family. They do not travel; I have knocked about the world a great deal, and I have never encountered a Bodkin except myself."

The Italian was again provoked to smile slightly at the Irish bull. Then he said, more quietly:

"I want my letter."

"*My* letter, you mean. Look here, it is time to put an end to this nonsense. If not, I shall have recourse to the English consul."

"The English consul cannot make me give up my name," said the Italian.

"*Your* name, forsooth! This is a strange hallucination of yours. Who ever heard of an Italian Bodkin since the world began?"

"Sir," said the Italian, flushing to the roots of his hair, "you must unsay those insulting words, or else——"

"Or else? What is the alternative?"

"You must fight. Here is my card. I shall send a friend to your hotel."

The Irishman seemed much surprised. He took the card, read on it the simple name, *Amedeo Bodkin*. Then he looked with a curious interest from the card to the young man for a minute or two. His anger seemed to have evaporated. He pulled out his pocket-book, took a card, and scribbled the name of his hotel and the hour he should be found there.

"Here is my card, and you see my name; it is a respectable name, and I cannot afford to give it up, particularly as my father left me little else. If, therefore, you insist on fighting for it, I'm your man.

'I ne'er delayed
When foeman bade me draw my blade.'

It is true I am rather out of practice, not having fought a duel for a hundred years—I mean, of course, our people. Before the Union there used to be a duel almost every day in Phœnix Park, but now it is unlawful."

"And do you Irish care about the law in such a matter when your honour is concerned?"

"Strange as it may seem, we have taken to observe the law in that particular. As for honour, why, it has got to take care of itself—and it does somehow," returned the Irishman, in a pleasant conversational tone. "I was just about to remark that I never served, even in the Militia, so I do not know how to handle a sword; but I am a *capital shot*." And he eyed his adversary closely.

"You have your choice of weapons," returned the Italian, calmly. "I have the honour to wish you good morning, sir."

"Good morning, sir," replied the other, and they separated.

Later in the day a friend of the Italian Bodkin waited on the Irish Bodkin to arrange a meeting at the dawn, so as to evade the *carabinieri*, who have a way of turning up on the ground as if they had been sent for, and conveying the combatants before a magistrate. It is the duty of a second to try to arrange the difference before proceeding to extremes, so that this one testified that his principal was really called Bodkin, that his family had been Italian for three generations. The young man remembered his grandfather, who had made money in Australia, and was in very good circumstances, but he had taken to painting as a profession. The youth's father was a learned man and a professor in a public school. He lost his patrimony by a bad investment, and died poor. The son was a teacher in the elementary government schools, and was the chief support of his mother and sister. He gave lessons in the evening to the *forestieri*, chiefly English people. He was a clever fellow, and burned the midnight oil in study.

Alexander Bodkin drew out this story by questions, and showing by his manner a friendly interest in the family history of his namesake.

"All this is very interesting," he said. "And he has a mother and sister dependent on him?"

"The sister teaches also, and earns enough to dress herself; but when a bad year comes and lessons are few, then both are short. The mother is a constant invalid, and they save all they can for her—to take her to the mineral baths in summer and make her comfortable. They love her very much."

"I should like to have a talk with your friend," said Alexander.

"But you are going to fight?"

"It would be quite incorrect in that case, I know; but I do not intend to fight. It is all nonsense, and I felt inclined to roar when he proposed it, it was so absurd; but I humoured his whim for the fun of the thing. Let us go forth and visit my namesake."

The friend took his hat with a pleased smile, content with his ability as a diplomatist. They walked in silence, Alexander Bodkin ruminating on the family history. He called to mind that two younger brothers of his grandfather had gone to Australia when mere youths. They had ceased to write home after their parents dropped off, and were believed to be dead long before their grand-nephew

Alexander was born. And now, by the merest chance, he had come upon a trace of one of his grand-uncles, had encountered his descendant, and was near fighting him for the right to bear his name.

It was a bitterly cold day, and "the north wind seemed to be blowing from all points," as Alexander remarked to his guide in his inconsequent Irish way, regardless of sense and science.

"What would you?" said the Italian, apologetically. "We must remember that we are in the heart of winter. This is Christmas Eve."

"Oh, I am not complaining," returned Bodkin cheerfully; "I am accustomed to a worse wind—a wind that would take the hair of your head out by the roots, and oaktrees in the same manner. But you are walking in the middle of the street. To be sure it is just as clean as the side walk, but the carriages make it slightly inconvenient."

"I always walk in the middle of the street," returned the Italian, "since I have had two narrow escapes of my life by walking on the footway."

"Brigands?" suggested the Irishman.

"We have no brigands in our cities," returned the Italian. "No, it is the fatal tendency people have to throw themselves down from third-storey windows that makes life uncertain for the passer-by. I fear they would make me cold as well as themselves. Here we are at our friend's door. His flat is on the third storey: you will see his name beside the door-bell. A *rivederla.*"

Alexander mounted the long flights of dark stone stairs, which were common to six families, and at last reached the third floor, and read on the plate with a strange sensation the "unique name" of Bodkin, which he had flattered himself was peculiar to his race. The door was opened by a young girl, very plainly dressed, but lady-like looking. She was a pale brunette with beautiful raven hair twisted in heavy coils at the back of her small head. She showed the visitor into a *salottino*, and said she would advise her brother of his presence. It was a small room with white muslin curtains and bare brick floor. In front of the sofa was a square of carpet, and round this in a circle were ranged several chairs, so that all the company might share the bit of carpet.

Our traveller glanced his quick eye round the room and saw genteel poverty written on every object. What struck him most was the number of books and the handsome binding of some of them which he saw in a large bookcase and lying on the table. He opened one or two and found they were presents from English friends and pupils.

In a few minutes the door opened and his adversary entered. He was like his sister, delicately pale, that fine clear palor which suggests a student's life. He had brown eyes and a broad square forehead, with dark hair standing straight up, like King Humbert's; he was of middle stature, slight and thin, well dressed in dark unobtrusive colours. The stranger, as soon as he saw him, advanced smiling and said:

"I beg your pardon for my rudeness this morning," and offered his hand, which the Italian took with great cordiality.

"I not only acknowledge your right to the name which I had hitherto believed the exclusive possession of my family, but I am come to claim you as a kinsman. I have good reason to believe that we are related."

"My dear sir, I am pleased and flattered to hear it. But how? pray be seated."

"Tell me all you know about your family history," said Alexander, seating himself on the sofa and stretching out his long legs to the centre of the carpet, while his host drew an easy-chair in front of him, and they took a long look at each other. The Italian then related more circumstantially what we have already heard about his Australian grandfather, Alexander listening attentively; he then told his story, which dove-tailed into the imperfect sketch he had just heard. The departure of the two boys sixty years before, moved thereto by the growing poverty of the dwindling estate, the number of sisters to be fortuned off it, and the spirit of adventure so strong in English youths, had been a family tradition which his aunts had often repeated. Their names were Alexander and Oliver.

"Oliver was my grandfather," said Amedeo. "There is no longer any doubt about our common ancestry." And he took another long look at his visitor. He was a handsome fellow with a blooming complexion, white and rosy, dark wavy hair, dark arched eyebrows, and those peculiar eyes which are called "Irish grey," with large pupils and a changing light in them. It struck Amedeo that there was something familiar to him in his face. The Irishman bore the scrutiny with a pleasant smile, and then said in his soft mellow voice with a certain accent which betrayed his nationality, though not what could be called a brogue.

"Well, do you like me for a cousin?"

"Very much indeed," replied the other laughing, and holding out his hand, which Alexander grasped warmly.

"Now I'll tell you all about myself," he said confidentially. "I belong to that unhappy class called distressed Irish landlords. The land has gone down in value by degrees—wants capital to improve it—no money to be had—tenants miserably poor—won't pay up—I won't press the poor devils. I have to live as economically as I can, chiefly on the continent, where one gets more for one's money than at home, and the sunshine gratis. The old place is delightful in summer; though the house is shabby, it is still comfortable. I have two dear old aunts who live there always, because they have hardly any other provision, and they keep house for me. I am a poor devil, and I don't mind telling you, my cousin, that I am anxious to get hold of that letter which may have a remittance from my solicitor who is at present in London (the hand seemed like his), because I am in low water at present."

"I should propose to go at once for the letter," replied Amedeo, "but I fear it is now too late; being Christmas Eve the office will be closed. We can go together to-morrow morning."

It was now dark; Amedeo lighted a lamp that stood on a cabinet, and placed it in the middle of the table. They fell into a discursive talk on literature, travels, and other subjects, but the personal note predominated, because they were interested in each other. Once when Alexander lamented his inability to redeem mortgaged land and do something for his people, Amedeo said with a smile:

"It would be easy for you to restore the prosperity of your house by marrying a bride with a handsome *dot*. They abound in England."

Alexander grew very red at this suggestion and laughed in an embarrassed manner, which made his cousin conclude that he had hit the nail on the head, and that he had an heiress in his eye; but what the Italian could not understand was why he should feel ashamed of such a very natural proceeding. Everybody he knew wanted to marry a *dot;* it was the dream of all the poor elegant young men of his acquaintance, to fascinate an American heiress, and they often reproached him for not making more of his opportunities when giving lessons to English and American ladies of fortune. But though he thought it a blameless thing for a poor man to look for money, his own poverty could not make Amedeo a fortune-hunter.

The Bodkin house was a small flat, and the kitchen was not so far off that the smell of hot soup could not penetrate to the little *salotto*. It was a cold room with a north aspect; there was no fire in the stove. The young man began to feel and look chilly. The smell of good hot *minestra* became more pungent; the dinner-hour had arrived. Alexander looked at his watch and said he must go. After a brief mental struggle Amedeo came to a momentous decision.

"Signor Alessandro, you have talked about your want of money; I have said nothing about my poverty, but it is self-evident; you see our mode of living. I am not ashamed of it, for I owe no man anything," he said smiling, and lifting his pale thin face to meet his tall friend's eyes, with something of a proud defiance in it.

"I wish I could say the same, my dear fellow; but it is hard to keep out of debt in these bad times."

They both began to laugh.

"The meaning of this preface is that I should like to ask you to dine, instead of letting you go away on this cold night to your hotel; but our fare is poor and mean compared with what you are accustomed to; still, if you would be so kind and friendly as to excuse all deficiencies——"

"My dear fellow, I shall be only too happy to make the acquaintance of your family; and I trust you will not treat me as a

stranger. The ladies will excuse my dress," looking at his rough grey suit.

Amedeo laughed.

"Don't imagine we dress for dinner," he said. "Excuse me for a moment; I must tell my mother."

Alexander, left alone, looked at himself in the glass over the mantelpiece, and combed back his wavy brown hair and moustache with a little pocket-comb. He divined something of his friend's pecuniary circumstances, for he was observant and sympathetic; but he was too much of a stranger to him and to the ways of the poor Italians to know the full depth of the poverty of government employés. Forty pounds a year is considered a high salary for a teacher in the national board schools, and Amedeo, being still young, had not yet attained to that, so that the maintenance of the household depended much on the foreign pupils in winter. He and his sister, like all their class, managed to dress respectably, but to do so comfort in other ways had to be sacrificed to an extent which English travellers could hardly understand. People in their position never entertain; every man eats at home and meets his friends at the café or club. Alexander, accustomed to the rough plenty of an Irish country house, where an unceremonious hospitality was the rule, had no notion what it cost this proud reserved Italian to break down the barriers which concealed the domestic misery, and admit a stranger to spy out the poverty of the land. But Amedeo was, after all, of Irish blood; the claim of kinship was strong, and Alexander had a personal fascination for him which had attracted him even when they were quarrelling over the letter. It was, however, difficult for him to reconcile his mother and sister to such an unlooked-for event as a visitor, and make them prepare for him in a few minutes. But Silvia would do anything to please her brother, and she was the housekeeper. She unlocked the wardrobe in the hall and got out her finest table linen (of that the poorest Tuscan has a good store), and went into the kitchen to help and direct the old servant in the culinary business. There was plenty of soup and maccaroni, but the meat that made the soup was a very small lump almost boiled away.

"The meat is not enough, Maria," said Silvia, contemplating it mournfully. "You must cut up the fowl at once and fry it on another fire."

"*Santa Madonna!*" cried the old dame aghast. "The chicken's for the *festa* to-morrow! *Signorina mia*, do you know what fowl costs at this season? You know it is only for a grand *festa* we can have it (only a bit for the Signora because she is ill), and to-morrow is Christmas Day!"

"Never mind, Maria. The case is urgent. It is a friend of my brother, and he is very hungry."

In a wonderfully short time the Signorina came to the *salotto* to announce dinner; having brushed her hair and changed her frock she

looked even brighter and fresher than on her first appearance. Her black dress was relieved by a soft creamy silk scarf round her neck tied in a bow in front. She had an ivory complexion, glossy black hair simply coiled at the back of her small graceful head, with tiny curling rings round her forehead and the nape of her neck, and black pencilled eyebrows; but when she raised her lashes the beholder was surprised to find instead of the black eyes he expected, a pair of soft serious grey ones.

The little dining-room was more comfortable than the *salottino;* there was a fire in the stove, and in an easy-chair near it sat a delicate old lady wrapped in a shawl, embracing a little brass *scaldino* full of red ashes, with both her colourless hands. She was tall and gaunt, her dark eyes looked out of caverns, and her abundant snow-white hair was covered with a little black lace kerchief. There was a certain air of puritanical simplicity about her which explained itself to Alexander when he learned that she was a true Waldensian from the Valle Pellice, whose family had been heroes and heroines in the bad old persecuting times. She was very clever and spoke both French and English well.

"Her children seemed devoted to her, so she must have something fine in her character," he concluded.

Alexander was presented as a relative, and was received cordially by the ladies; as they spoke English better than he spoke Italian the conversation was carried on in his own language, and as he was always at his ease, he made himself very amusing with his stories of his travels, anecdotes of famous persons, and his mimicry of eccentric acquaintances, which he rendered with a dramatic effect that made his entertainers laugh heartily.

The dinner consisted of large plates of soup and great slices of dark bread, a small quantity of boiled beef, and after that the famous fowl fried with cauliflower; then came salad and cheese, and it wound up with a cup of black coffee. They had also good red wine, but that had been a special flask procured for Christmas. The old woman in the kitchen shook her head ruefully over the empty dishes and

"Bitterly thought on the morrow,"

while the ringing laughter of the young people in the parlour resounded through the little house and made her reflect on the thoughtlessness and recklessness of youth.

Alexander, while entertaining his hosts, was not less entertained himself. He was amused and interested in watching an Italian interior of the middle class, and he found his cousins emphatically what the Italians call *simpatici.* He watched the Signorina taking down from the cupboard a dainty little service of antique china, arrange the cups on the table and pour out the coffee, which she had made herself with a spirit lamp, and he wished to help her, but

"from utter courtesy forbore."

Amedeo offered his visitor a cigar while they were still at table. Alexander glanced at the Signorina and asked if the smoke annoyed her. She assured him that she was accustomed to it and liked it, so they puffed away contentedly, while Signorina removed her coffee-cups, brought them back washed, and proceeded to hang them up in the cupboard. Alexander admired her quiet graceful movements and the simplicity of her manners.

"She is a nice sweet girl," he thought, and "would be pretty if she had a little more flesh on her bones. They all look thin and pale and under-fed."

Silvia sat down by the lamp with her muslin embroidery, and then the visitor could watch her more persistently without causing her any embarrassment. He admired her pretty head bent over her work, her fine black tresses, the delicate wax-like ear and throat, the small slender hands.

"Signorina," he said suddenly, as he was about to depart, "do you know that you remind me of one of my aunts? I cannot tell in what particular, but in some indefinable way you suggest her. You are a true Bodkin in spite of being grafted on a new stock."

The girl flushed, and her defect being want of colour she looked charming at that moment, with a sweet shy look in her dark grey eyes, which sometimes took a deep violet shade.

"What you say must be true," said Amedeo. "I never noticed it till now, but Silvia's eyes are just like yours. Is it not so, mother?"

The mother looked from one to the other and recognised the likeness. Alexander bowed and said, "You flatter me, my friends; but I am pleased that you find a resemblance between us. Our grandfathers were brothers; blood is thicker than water. Good-night, cousin Silvia!" and he gave her cold little hand a very warm pressure.

"Blood is thicker than water," he repeated to himself as he strode along the silent street. "That is a grand old lady, but I do not feel drawn towards her as toward the young people. They are awfully poor, yet so refined and cultivated; they interest me." He wondered they did not ask him for Christmas Day, and concluded that it was because they could not procure a handsome joint of roast-beef and a plum-pudding; but he did not suspect that having demolished the fowl and flask of Chianti there was nothing for to-morrow but bread and *minestra*. Still his thoughts kept playing round his new-found relatives, and he longed to have a home near to invite them and to give them an Irish welcome, with a pretty present for each.

"Can't you give them some presents here? And why not invite the whole family to your hotel and give them a good dinner to-morrow?" suggested something inside of Alexander who was always tempting him to extravagance.

"Ah, to be sure, old fellow, there you are at it again!" replied his other self. "I should be delighted—but the sinews of war are wanting. I must pay my hotel bill first. I ought to take a lesson

from that poor fellow who said he owed no man anything. It is vastly to his honour, I am sure, and it made me ashamed of myself. I must not be generous till I have something of my own."

In this humble frame of mind, our traveller mounted the stairs to his room and found on the table a letter forwarded from Milan. It contained a much-desired cheque from an editor to whom he had acted as "occasional correspondent" in his travels. "Oh, joy! I shall have the pleasure of giving the dinner to my poor relations after all!"

Christmas morning dawned bright and beautiful in the fair City of Flowers. The air was crisp, frosty and bracing; the sky was brilliantly blue, the Arno a clear green, the sun sparkling on the grand cathedral and its matchless campanile; the bells were ringing and all the fountains playing. The streets were full of citizens with their families in their best attire, going to or coming from church. At nine o'clock our two friends were on their way to the post-office armed with such credentials as would prove their claims to the letter. On the way Alexander told Amedeo of his little plan of taking the ladies for a drive in the park early in the afternoon, and then having them all to dinner in his hotel; and it was settled that they should meet them coming out of church to get their consent.

Arrived at the post-office they presented their credentials and intimated that they were agreed that one of them should open the letter on the spot. The clerk produced it; Amedeo put his hands in his pockets and nodded towards his friend. Alexander took it, and moving to one side out of the crowd opened it. He glanced down the first page, turned over, and read the second and third without uttering a syllable. Then he lifted his eyes and fixed Amedeo with a curious dumfounded look.

"What is the matter? Have you good or bad news?" asked the other.

"Come out in the piazza and let us have a talk," returned Alexander. "I don't know whether I am on my head or my heels. Do you remember your grandfather speaking of a brother who went to Australia with him?"

"Yes."

"Well, that brother of your grandfather and my grandfather has died in Australia at an advanced age, childless, leaving an immense fortune—the exact amount is not ascertained—to be divided between his nephew's children. He has also left legacies to my aunts. *We* are all the nephew's children alive—*we* are his heirs."

"Alessandro!"

"My dear fellow, I doubted my senses at first. Here is the letter; read, it concerns you as much as me; you have an equal interest in it."

Amedeo had grown red and pale by turns, and now his lip quivered and he bit it as he took the letter with trembling hand and

pretended to study the contents. Presently he thrust it back to Alexander and heaved a great sigh.

"There, take it; it is enough for me to know that a competency is assured to my poor mother and Silvia, a certainty of comfort for the rest of their lives. You do not know—you never could understand—what they have gone through—how much needed this is. Oh, thank God!"

He almost broke down. They were standing under the colonnade of the Uffizi Gallery just opposite the post-office; Alexander put his hand to Amedeo's shoulder and pushed him down on a stone bench. Then he took his hand and congratulated him warmly, and added: "I am as glad on your account as my own—I am, upon my honour."

Amedeo pressed his hand, but did not speak. Alexander then sat silent and still for a few minutes ruminating. By the overpowering effect of the joyful news on his friend he could measure the depth of the misery he had known, the worst part of which was probably the dread which haunts over-worked men of breaking down and leaving their womankind desolate, or being a helpless burden on somebody's charity. This weight was taken off his heart suddenly, and no wonder he felt stunned.

"Amedeo," he said aloud, "you are a capital fellow and I like you more and more. You have taught me a lesson on economy, too. I have hitherto been too careless and thoughtless; because I had not enough of money I did not put my one talent to good account. I am going to turn over a new leaf, and apply this fortune, which I have done nothing to earn, to the best purpose, I hope for the good of others. I feel a sense of responsibility about property which I never felt before. We owe something to posterity, though it is an incontrovertible fact that statement of Sir Paul Roche that posterity has never earned our gratitude by doing anything for us."

Amedeo stared somewhat bewildered.

"He was a countryman of mine who, when the claims of posterity were urged, asked what has posterity ever done for us? and every one was silenced by the remark."

Amedeo laughed, but in an agitated absent sort of way, and then said:

"This fortune will have a sobering effect on your wild spirits, I think. It is the right way to receive such a heaven-sent gift. And what have I done to deserve it either?"

"Ah, my friend, it is no use to try to conceal it from me, for you cannot! Your whole life is a continual sacrifice, and your present happiness is in nowise selfish—it is purely altruistic," said Alexander.

"If you had not been here that letter would not have come to Florence; they would not have known aught of me, and then—" said Amedeo, pausing.

"And if I had accepted your challenge to meet you this morning, the letter would have gone back to London probably, as I might be

lying stiff and cold, and then— ! Ah, Amedeo ! you have great reason to be thankful that you have not a dead man seated beside you on this bench."

"*Misericordia !*"

"Tell me now, on this Christmas morning," pursued Alexander in his serio-comic manner, "with all those sweet bells ringing, and the churches of all the different nations here singing 'Peace on earth and good will to men,' do you think it was a worthy act for a *galantuomo* to stain the earth with his brother's blood ?"

"It would be villanous ; but I did not intend to kill you."

"Only to 'wing me' ? That would have been more cruel still."

"*Chè ! chè !* I would not have hit you."

"Then this mode of defending your honour is a solemn farce, and ought to be laughed out of court. Yet I have heard of some fatal cases. You are a man of character, Amedeo, and you ought to set your face against this absurd practice. Promise me that you will."

"I would promise you anything, my dear Alexander, after the happy news you have brought me this day. And you don't mind sharing the fortune which would have been all yours only for these foreign cousins ?" he said with a smile, looking the other in the face. But the frank, open, joyous expression of the handsome Irishman removed any lingering doubt he might have had.

"I tell you I am the happiest fellow alive, and would be even if the fortune were less than I am led to expect," he replied. "It removes the horrid necessity of marrying the heiress. Yes, you guessed truly, Amedeo : I was urged, pressed to make a convenient match, and there was one at hand which would settle all difficulties. But oh ! the blessed day ! I had not asked her. I put it off from time to time ; now I am free, and I am almost beside myself with joy."

The two friends walked on, hardly feeling the ground under their feet so airy was their tread, till they reached the Waldensian church, where they met the Signora Bodkin and her daughter coming out. Alexander made haste to invite them for a drive in the Cascine, and afterwards to dine at his hotel, which they agreed to do, and then Amedeo, trembling with eagerness to impart his great news, called a cab and drove home with them.

Alexander, standing at the foot of the stairs when he alighted from the carriage at three o'clock, saw Amedeo giving his arm to his mother on the top of the last flight, and Silvia running before them with a shawl and a cushion. It seemed marvellous to him the effect of happiness upon that sweet creature. She appeared several years younger, and ever so much prettier than she had done last night. Her face was radiant, and her little feet hardly touched the steps as she flew down to the door.

"Signor Alessandro, I congratulate you, and I thank you !" she

said putting her hand in his, as he relieved her of her burden of shawls.

"Why thank me, cousin? The merit is not mine."

"Oh, you have brought good fortune with you!" she cried, "and you have been so kind about it all, so generous!"

"You regard me as a sort of fairy godfather, I suppose? All right; I must try to live up to that character," said Alexander, hastening to meet the Signora, and convey her to the carriage. Even her worn old face had lost some of its wrinkles and wore a happy smile; she walked more uprightly and seemed less afflicted with cold than before. It did him good to see all these signs of contentment in this amiable family; it put him in his pleasantest mood, and he entertained his guests during the drive with his brightest stories, and they, being in a holiday mood, were easily made laugh. It was not so much the matter, as the comic manner of relating things that amused them and charmed them. His droll smile was irresistible; the tones of his rich soft voice rolling his "r's" with Celtic energy, had a latent humour which predisposed the listeners to mirth.

Arrived at the Cascine the young people got out of the carriage, and wrapping their mother up in a heap of shawls, ordered the coachman to drive slowly along the sunny avenue by the Arno while they walked ahead under the trees. The beauty of the park and the surrounding hills, combined with the clear crisp frosty air, made the walk delightful, and the hours passed all too rapidly; but it was marvellous how intimate the three young people had become in that space of time. They seemed to have known each other for years. Silvia's pale cheeks had got a rose tint and her grey eyes looked brighter and darker than usual, so that she resembled more than ever her cousin Alexander. She talked more than usual, too, the conversation being carried on in English to please Alexander, who liked to hear her pretty, child-like foreign accent. And while she was seeking the proper phraseology to express her thought he always supplied the exact words she wanted, so complete was his sympathy and understanding of her mind and character. Whence came this sympathy he accounted for by the tie of blood, family likenesses being capricious and often cropping up in distant relatives; and to the underlying similarity of tastes was added the charm of novelty, each belonging to a different nation. Amedeo, as was inevitable under the circumstances, often found himself left out of the conversation. But he was one of those rare unselfish men who was always more occupied with the happiness and pleasure of others than his own, and he was content to listen, amused and pleased to see his sister in such good spirits.

A delicious little dinner was awaiting the friends at the hotel, and they had a merry Christmas indeed; not one discordant note marred the joy of that happy day.

"Here's to our merry meeting this day twelve months," said the

host, filling the ladies' glasses. "May it be under the old family roof-tree of our common ancestry—I don't mean monkeys, you know, by common ancestors—I mean Bodkins, of course, who were very ancient, but don't date quite so far back. What pleasure it will give me to greet you there I can hardly express, but you will understand and believe me, I am sure."

And with this they broke up and shook hands.

"I wish you a happy new year, cousin Silvia, and many of them," said Alexander, as they stood at the foot of the stairs, ready for departure, after he had paid his compliments to the mother.

"I wish you the same with all my heart," she replied, with her pretty Italian effusiveness, which had in it, however, a note of deep sincerity. "You deserve it."

"Ah, to be sure, the fairy godfather ought to have his share of the sweets he is dispensing with such a liberal hand. At least he ought to live in the affectionate remembrance of his god-children—*non è vero?*"

"Surely!"

"That is reward enough for the pleasure of being the bearer of good tidings," said Alexander, suddenly laying by his gay smile and looking serious.

"Will you remember me when I am gone, apart from the good news?"

"Will *you* remember us when you return to your gay fashionable world?" asked Silvia.

"Aye; that I will for ever."

He darted a look down upon her upturned face which pierced her and at the same moment revealed his own soul to her. Her head grew giddy with the sudden revelation; she could not speak or move. He took her hand and wished her the compliments of the season in the ordinary tones of society, while he led her to the carriage where her mother was already placed. But in the thrilling pressure of his hand she felt a great wave of emotion was passing over his soul, and it communicated itself to hers. She sank back in the corner of the carriage and heard nothing more that passed. The one thought which absorbed her was, he was going away! If the imperious duties of his position obliged him to depart like the fairy prince he described himself, why did he not spare her that look which revealed his momentous secret?

Arrived at the door of their modest dwelling, Amedeo was handing his mother out of the carriage and remarking what a happy day it had been—not all due to the fortune—for much they owed to their charming cousin.

"How shall we live without him when he is gone?" he said.

Just then someone slapped him on the shoulder and exclaimed—"Here I am, old fellow. You cannot live without me, and I cannot live without you—at least one of you." It was the fairy prince who

had just leaped off the box. He leaned into the carriage where Silvia still sat almost dazed, and taking her hand he pressed it to his bosom and whispered, "To part with you would be parting with my own soul, or tearing it asunder."

'A twofold existence,
I am where thou art.'"

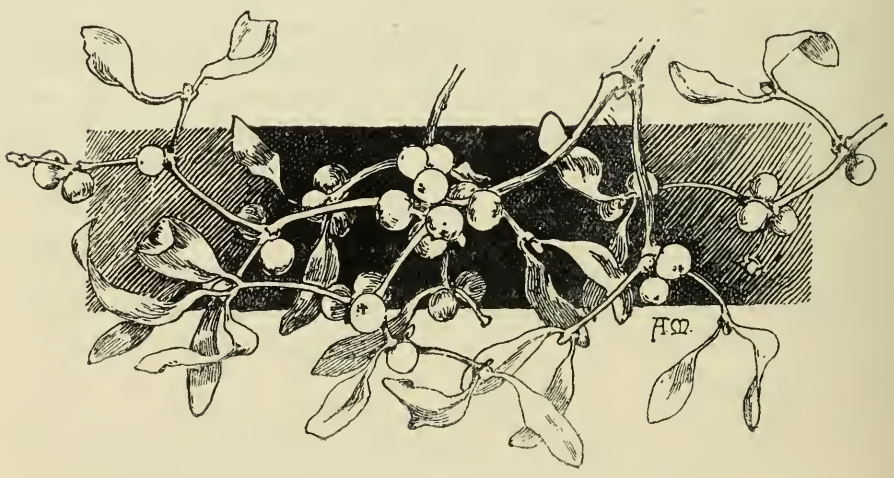
He then turned to the old lady and said, "Signora, you told me this evening that you would never refuse me any favour I could ask. I am now a suppliant for the greatest it is in your power to bestow. I ask the hand of your daughter. I see I have taken you by surprise, but when I had decided I could not rest to-night till I had my answer. It is better to know our fate at once. Speak a word for me, Amedeo."

"I think Silvia should speak for herself," said the brother.

"She has spoken—with her eyes," returned the lover. "There is nothing for you and your mother to do but to give us your blessing. It is all right, dear Signora, is it not? You will rest better to-night if you add this crowning happiness to our happy day and say *yes?*"

The old lady, thus importuned on her door-step on a cold night, did not withhold her consent long, and after a general shaking of hands the eccentric suitor leaped into the carriage and drove off, saying as he waved his adieux:

"Oh, that blessed Bodkin letter!"



"RING OUT THE OLD—RING IN THE NEW."

So still, so still, the hush so deep,
That falls upon the charmèd land,
While we our wistful vigil keep
Proclaims the Holy-tide at hand.

Proclaims at hand the birth of Christ—
Sweet vagrant notes of mellow bells,
From spires wrapped soft in rimy mist,
Float o'er the far white hills and dells.

Then warm as sunshine, light as snow,
Falls on our hearts the sense of rest,
The sense of peace—by which we know
Christ is *Himself* our Christmas guest.

HELEN MARION BURNSIDE.

THE NEW BOY AT STANHOPE'S.

THE sleepy sunshiny old town of St. Baldwin's prides itself with justice, so its inhabitants will tell you, on three noteworthy possessions—its antiquities, its Grammar School and its good society, and these three are inseparably connected—or were, till the coming of Mrs. Paul Stanhope.

Society confines itself to the Minster Close and its neighbourhood; clinging as faithfully to the quaint, tall ivy-covered houses as the rooks to their nests in the elm trees that surround their green stretches of velvet lawn; and the rooks only know what would happen to an outsider who dared to intrude on the sacred precincts. The biggest and best houses belong to the Staff of the Grammar School, the rest are tenanted by the resident clergy, retired officers of both the services, a few Indian civilians and sundry widowed and spinster offshoots of the county families. The headmaster is a dignified, handsome personage, a scholar and preacher of note, who is known to have refused a Colonial bishopric, and is reported to be sure of the next deanery. His wife, Lady Cecilia, is great at bazaars and similar church functions, but chary of her presence at minor entertainments. The second in command is like unto his chief, with a high-nosed, haughty wife from Girton, who is believed to have edited a Greek play. The next is mild, musical and well connected, with a wife to correspond; and the fourth is an elderly, quiet, high-bred looking man, chiefly remarkable as a good master, a bad tennis-player and the husband of Mrs. Paul Stanhope.

How he ever came to marry her no one in St. Baldwin's can imagine; and the most curious thing about it is that they are both still in love with one another!

She is a showy little woman, with a brilliant taste in dress, no culture to speak of, and a devouring social ambition; worst of all—fabulously, flagrantly, *indecently* rich. She is understood to be the only child and heiress of an eminent oil and colour merchant in a northern manufacturing town, and a stout, red-faced old gentleman who appeared in St. Baldwin's one day criticising the antiquities in broadest Lancashire, and stigmatising the Grammar School residences as "mere rat-holes" was supposed to be the papa in question.

His visit was followed by the erection of a palatial residence, all freestone and plate-glass, for the young couple in Forest Road—a region quite beyond the pale, where the aspiring tradesman pitches his suburban villa—and a London upholsterer was subsequently turned loose in it with instructions to "mak summut as ud oppen t' foalks eyes," and that upholsterer had obeyed.

Stanhope had stood firm on the point of not giving up his boarders on his marriage. He really liked his boys, and perhaps reflected that the boom in mineral oil might not last for ever, and that his father-in-law, though mildly generous to his daughter, strewing her wedded path with costly gifts and cheques in four figures, had made but a limited settlement on her, with some vague notion of ensuring her good behaviour.

Thus it chanced that one morning in the Michaelmas term Mr. Stanhope, after reading and re-reading a letter, with a doubtful look in his handsome brown eyes, handed it across the breakfast-table to his wife, remarking :

"Another boy. I don't think we can take him."

Mrs. Stanhope took but a languid interest in the boarders, who were relegated to a separate building under the care of an experienced matron. She stretched out a pretty white hand, looking admiringly at the twinkle of the diamonds on her plump fingers, then more admiringly at her husband's face half-eclipsed by his coffee-cup, lastly at the sheet of paper, indifferently at first, then with sudden interest. It was thick and creamy and decorated with a coronet and address.

"Sherringham Abbey! Can it be from the Earl?"

"No, only from some guest of his, I suppose."

"But it's signed 'Sherringham.' No, I see that is only the Christian name. 'Sherringham Winston.' Well 'Winston' is one of the Earl's family names. It *must* be a relation." The peerage was the one subject on which Mrs. Paul Stanhope could have passed an examination with credit. She read—

"DEAR SIR,—I have sent in the name of my son John Marmaduke Valance Sherringham Winston—"

("The Earl's name is John, and the Countess was one of the ladies Valence, perhaps she's his god-mother.")

"—to the headmaster for admission to the Grammar School at the half-term. I have also requested that he may become an inmate of your house, and I now write to explain to you in confidence my reasons for wishing you to undertake this charge. By an unforeseen series of circumstances my son is now brought into the position of next heir to a large landed estate and, in all human probability, to a title—"

("It can't be Sherringham. The Earl has ten children.")

"—I now recognise with deep regret the selfishness of the affection which prompted me to keep the child with me in my wanderings from one foreign capital to another—"

("I suppose he's in the Diplomatic service.")

"—instead of giving him the education of an English gentleman. My kind kinsman recommends St. Baldwin's strongly—"

("I wonder why? Perhaps he knows Lady Cecilia or some of the governors.")

"—and having had the pleasure of meeting you and your charming wife last summer, assures me that you are eminently qualified to give my poor boy the tone of good society in which, owing to his wandering life, he might be found deficient."

"Why! Who! Where? It *must* have been that delightful old gentleman at the table-d'hôte at Southsea, who hadn't put his name down in the visitor's book. I *told* you he was somebody."

"My dear, I never denied it," said Mr. Stanhope, placidly handing his cup for more coffee. "But I don't particularly want the boy. An unlicked cub of fifteen sent here to learn manners and his alphabet, and to teach the others all manner of foreign tricks."

"But Paul—! We *must* have him here. Next heir to a title—I wish I knew what it is—I suppose that doesn't always make them honourables, does it? What a pity! It would give quite a tone to the school. Paul, we *must* have him! If we are full, so much the better. It will be a reason for having him here in the house with us. I shall give him the blue bedroom."

"Put a schoolboy in amongst all that lace and satin flouncing and frilling! You must do as you like, dear, but if he keeps rabbits in the wardrobe and makes booby-traps with your Limoges crockery don't blame me."

"Then he may come? Paul, you're a darling!"

"If the headmaster has consented, I don't see how I can prevent it; as long as the school fees are paid in advance and he has nothing catching about him. Time for prayers! I must be off!" and with a hasty kiss Mr. Stanhope shook himself into his gown, snatched up his cap and departed.

Not only Mrs. Stanhope's smart victoria but Mrs. Paul Stanhope herself was in waiting to receive the new boy on the appointed day. A pile of neat luggage stood on the platform, and beside it a slight dark youth in a well-cut tweed suit and straw hat. He followed the servant to the carriage where Mrs. Stanhope was prepared to greet him with motherly effusion, but, though he smiled a charming smile and raised his hat gracefully as he approached, she felt, she didn't know why, a sort of check to her amiable impulse. She was prepared for shyness, for, possibly, a dash of aristocratic hauteur, but not for the first look of those bold black eyes that read her through and through and over and over, and made her feel as if all the sins she had ever committed as well as the incipient crack in the thumb of her glove, and the tiny touch of pearl powder on the left side of her nose, flashed into view in that one glance. It passed in an instant (and nothing ever disconcerted Mrs. Paul Stanhope much longer), so before they reached home she and the new-comer were on excellent terms.

"I asked him about the title," she said during a confidential chat over the study fire that night.

"You did! What did he say?"

"Oh, he coloured up and said, 'No such thing;' and then, 'I wish you'd never heard of it.' I heard him mutter, 'dev'lish bad taste'—I suppose he meant his father; and then he begged I wouldn't talk about it. The property is in Staffordshire. Then I asked him how old he was."

"And what did he tell you? Fifteen?"

"No, he laughed and said it was his dear old pater's weakness to make him out still an infant. He was really not certain himself. He had never kept his birthdays."

"He has been scandalously neglected all round. He knows nothing whatever of Latin or mathematics, and not much more of English. I was surprised to find he could read and write as well as he does."

"But living abroad."

"Oh, I know. But Brown says his French isn't up to much either. Low-class accent and idiom—certainly not the language of diplomacy."

"Mr. Brown's own French may be good enough to teach the Army Class, but I doubt whether it is up to date colloquially."

"Well, well. We shall see what extra lessons with Byles will do for him"—Mr. Byles was the head of the preparatory school—"and meanwhile take as much interest in him as you like, my dear, only remember—he's no chicken. He's been shaving these two years at least, or I'm much mistaken."

The new boy's débût in the playing-fields had at first been hardly more successful. His mind was a blank as to football and fives, and his rowing lacked form, but he was good-tempered and ready to learn, explaining that his time had been spent amongst people whose severest physical exercise was cigarette-making. However, when Hewlett, an ill-conditioned young ruffian in the fifth form, ventured to indulge in some very uncomplimentary criticisms on Winston's appearance, the promptitude with which he was invited to take a licking was only equalled by the neatness and despatch with which that licking was administered that same evening, after tea, behind the pavilion before a critical and delighted circle of spectators.

But it was in Mrs. Stanhope's drawing-room that Winston's merits found their full appreciation. He spent every spare moment with her, clipped her poodle for her in the very latest French style and fitted him with silver bangles, fetched and carried like a poodle himself; delighted her with choice scraps of gossip from his father's letters concerning the great folk with whom he was staying, and handed tea and cake on her "at home" day, when he amused old Lady Rumbold to such an extent that he received an invitation to "Naoshera Villa," an honour never before conferred on mortal schoolboy.

St. Baldwin's might disapprove of seeing the handsome, well-dressed youngster every afternoon in the victoria beside Mrs. Stanhope, or curled up, like the tame cat he was, on her drawing-room hearth-rug,

but society nevertheless studied its peerage, and before half the first week was out had settled that there was either galloping consumption in the Sherringham family, or something unsound in the Earl's marriage. Lady Cecilia might have spoken with authority on the subject, but Lady Cecilia never went to afternoon teas, and the chit-chat of St Baldwin's only floated up to her by slow degrees.

"The Rector has sent to say he cannot come on Wednesday, after all!" Mrs. Stanhope exclaimed disgustedly. "And I don't know another odd man to ask. I shall make Marmaduke come in; he shall take in Miss Norris." Now Miss Norris was an Indian judge's only daughter. Mr. Stanhope demurred. His wife's wish was still law to him, but he felt uneasily that on points of school etiquette her instinct was not to be depended on, and this dinner-party was to be a very special one indeed.

A certain scientific peer was now staying with one of the governors of the Grammar School. Lady Cecilia had issued invitations to an "at home" in his honour; but Mrs. Paul Stanhope had "gone one better" and secured him for a dinner the day before; the second motive of the entertainment being the display of the eminent oil merchant's latest gift, a gorgeous dessert-service in gold plate, whereof the fame had spread abroad. Society in St. Baldwin's did not give dinner-parties and possessed no gold candlesticks or fruit-baskets, so it sneered but accepted.

A flutter of feverish excitement pervaded the Stanhope household on the important day. A French artist from London, with his aides and materials, took possession of the kitchen. The butler requisitioned all the other servants to assist in putting his plate and glass into order. Mrs. Stanhope was agitated about her dress—a trousseau marvel which had almost run to seed for want of an opportunity to wear it, and required revision and alteration at the last minute. She leaves it on record that she could never have lived through the stress and strain of it all but for "that dear boy Duke."

Luckily it was St. Baldwin's day and a school holiday. The other boys went off to a match in the playing-fields, but he remained faithful to his liege lady, helped to arrange flowers, ran to the town with forgotten orders, filled in menu and guest cards neatly, told her exactly how far back on her head she ought to wear her diamond aigrette, and was at last found with a glass-cloth girded on by way of apron, polishing an entrée dish and entertaining the party in the pantry with an account of how he had once helped his friend the host of the *Golden Stag* somewhere in the Tyrol by acting as waiter one day when a great personage arrived unexpectedly, and the staff of the hotel had been disbanded for the season.

He assisted Mrs. Fanshaw to put the final touches to the completed glory of the table, and then ran off to get through his school preparation in time to dress.

Mrs. Stanhope went to summon her husband to admire the result of her labours. He was ushering a little man out of his study as she crossed the hall; a sharp dark little man in a very bad temper.

"Well, sir, I ask you for the last time to think better of it," he was saying.

"And I must answer for the last time, 'No,'" replied Mr. Stanhope in his gentle obstinate voice.

"Very well, sir; I shall take my own measures, and if anything goes wrong the responsibility rests with you."

"I am prepared to accept it. Good afternoon."

"Who's that, Paul? An aggrieved parent?" Mrs. Stanhope asked, as the street-door closed.

"A very much aggrieved man. Did your orchids come in time?"

Mr. Stanhope's face was grave as he gazed on the brilliant show of plate and crystal, fruit and flowers—a study in gold and white. His wife was dimly beginning to understand that he thought her magnificence out-of-place. "Father sent me a cheque, you know, and told me to do it in style."

"All right, my dear," he replied as usual. "The money is yours to do what you please with."

"But I don't please unless you please too," she answered, half sympathetic, half resentful. Then they parted and he took his way thoughtfully to Winston's room.

It was not the blue bedroom after all. Duke had taken alarm at its gorgeousness and begged for another, a little bit of a place over the pantry, built for the butler, but indignantly declined by him as "inconvenient and having a north aspect." Here Mr. Stanhope found his pupil, looking over a Latin grammar in his shirt-sleeves.

"I want your father's present address, Winston," he said.

"I can't say where he is exactly to-day, sir. He is always visiting about. A letter to his club will always reach him. Anything wrong, sir?"

"N-no." Mr. Stanhope seemed to have a difficulty in expressing himself. "Mrs. Stanhope has asked you to dine with us to-night——"

"But I begged off, sir," eagerly interrupted Winston. "You see I never went out with my father anywhere, and"—with a frank laugh—"I'm shy. I don't know English ways and might be discrediting myself and you too. That's the truth. But you don't mind me coming in afterwards, do you?"

"N-no," said Mr. Stanhope again. "How about your work?"

"Got it all done but one little bit that I can't make sense of."

"Let me help you." The two sat down side by side. Mr. Stanhope had nothing to do with the boy in school, but gave him a little help at odd times, at first on account of his wife's interest in the lad, later, because of his own.

"You are getting on fast, Winston. You will soon catch up other

boys of your age if you persevere. With your ability the highest prizes of knowledge are open to you."

"I might be a Prime Minister, or even a headmaster," Winston answered, not disrespectfully, but with a certain dreary mockery which Mr. Stanhope elected not to notice, but hurried off to dress.

"Now, what's wrong?" asked Winston of himself as he dropped on his knees beside the trunk in which he had been groping when the master entered. "I shouldn't wonder now if that awful dad of mine hadn't paid the fees. It would be just like him," and he exploded with silent laughter. His thoughts had taken another direction when he emerged from the trunk. "So I might be a blooming sixth-form boy, and go to college. Oh my!" Then he laid out his dress-suit neatly, and proceeded to adorn himself.

Mrs. Stanhope's lucky star shone on that evening. The dress fitted to perfection, the table was a vision of beauty, with its lovely white blossoms in their costly vases and its gold-broidered naperies. The cook surpassed himself; the noble lord showed unbounded appreciation of the fare spread before him, and Mrs. Stanhope's diamonds put out Lady Cecilia's as an arc-lamp a night-light. The little lady sat through the dinner in a quiver of delight and exultation, enjoying herself thoroughly.

Even the bad half-hour in the drawing-room afterwards had its mitigations. Lady Cecilia yawned frankly when addressed, and calmly composed herself to sleep behind her fan. The county ladies prosed to one another about their relations, their G.F.S. work in their villages, and their children's ailments, and, except once to ask for a subscription, seemed to forget the hostess's existence. The masters' wives talked school "shop," in which she had no part, but she had not time to realise the full dreariness of it all before the door opened to admit Duke, and, shyly treading on his heels, the head of the school. A sixth-form boy, big, bronzed, and bashful, who had won an Oxford scholarship and also a match for his county against the M.C.C., but who nevertheless bore himself meekly, not to say sheepishly, with a painful sense of his coat being too tight in the arm-holes and his tie a wisp. Now Duke's coat was built by an artist, and his tie a miracle, diamond studs glittered in his shirt, and he came into the room as if he liked it. The boys slipped modestly into the background near their hostess and the pretty Miss Norris, whom Duke was not allowed to take in to dinner, and in five minutes the fun in that corner became so fast and furious that the county ladies stopped their mild gossip to listen, and the youngest and giddiest of the masters' wives came and joined in. Then such of the gentlemen as had not deserted to the billiard-room entered, and by that time Duke was at the piano and the first few bars of a popular operetta rippled from under his finger-tips. He played a little, sang a song, and then another, giving imitations of the actors; then dropped into a popular melody with a chorus in which everybody felt impelled

to join. Even Lady Cecilia laughed under protest and made a mental memo. to have him in at her "at home."

It was just then that Mr. Stanhope, entering from the billiard-room, stepped three paces into the room softly, and laid his hand on the arm of the head of the school. Then both slipped away unnoticed.

They crossed the hall to the dining-room, where the butler was still moving about, extinguishing candles and putting away decanters.

"I should like to show you one piece of that service, Hardman. It's as fine as anything since Benvenuto Cellini. Have you put it all away, Colburn?"

"Why, no, sir." Colburn's tone was slightly offended. "Not without having cleaned it, after all them messy flowers and candles. I shall just leave it here till to-morrow. There isn't time to do justice to it to-night, and I believe my supper is ready, sir," and with that Colburn disappeared to the distant servants' hall.

When he had gone Mr. Stanhope extinguished the last candle and lifted the heavy velvet window curtain. The moon, which had been full on the house, was dropping behind a clump of firs. The stable-clock struck the half-hour after ten.

"I have received a warning this afternoon that an attempt will be made on the house to-night," he said, peering out. "A man came down from Scotland Yard about it. He wants to catch the burglars in the act."

"Yes, sir," said Hardman delightedly; "can't I help?"

"He suspects a confederate indoors. I do not, and I have refused to allow him or any of his men to conceal themselves on the premises. I thought I'd ask you to keep guard here till I got rid of our guests."

Hardman grinned joyfully. "Have you got a revolver, sir?"

"No. No noise. You must trust to your fists. Now let's look at the windows."

The great oriel at the end of the room which had been open during dinner was securely fastened, the last act of the conscientious Colburn before departing, and the electric alarm attached. Mr. Stanhope thought for a moment, and then disconnected the alarm and unbolted the window. Hardman, in high glee, established himself behind the folds of the curtain.

He would have been rather astonished if he had seen his master's next proceeding, which was to unlock with a key, fastened to his watch chain, a door in the passage leading to the back of the house and set it open, and then, taking up a wax taper, stand patiently under the gas-lamp in the hall waiting events. Through the drawing-room door came the sound of Duke's merry music for a few minutes, and then a buzz of talk and laughter. Then a pause, and then, in solemn silence, the first bars of Mozart's exasperating Fantasia in C minor interpreted by the musical master's wife. At the end of the first movement the door opened softly and Duke slipped out.

He gave a nervous jump when he saw the master stretching to the gas trying ineffectually to light his taper.

"Hillo, Winston. Just come here and light this for me. Those servants have gone off to supper and Colburn hasn't put out the liqueur stand. Just light the gas in the plate-closet, please."

Winston carried his taper to the plate-closet and lighted up a small gas-jet in the wall. As he did so the door shut gently on him and he heard the key click twice in the lock. He gave a start that turned the gas out and sprang madly at the door. It was fast. A stout iron-lined door with no keyhole on the inside. A sharp spasm of fear, rage, astonishment, clutched at his heart, and he drew his breath in an agony of actual physical pain for an instant. Then that passed, and he stood and swore, noiselessly but vigorously, for a space. Lastly he groped till he found the corner of a plate-chest to sit down upon and burst out laughing.

"Sold, by Jingo! The old fox! Now *what* is he going to do with me?"

He had time to consider the question. Eleven chimed out from a clock somewhere. The Fantasia after raising many false hopes came really and truly to its end at last, and the guests in the drawing-room began to disperse—they are early people at St. Baldwin's. Winston could hear the carriages rolling up and the opening and shutting of the front-door. Then half-past eleven sounded, and he swore afresh and stamped with excitement. More voices and footsteps in the hall; this was the later party from the billiard-room. Then the last bang of the front-door and Colburn passing yawningly back to his unfinished supper. Then a confused noise of shouts and whistles that made him run wildly to the door and glue his ear to it in a frantic effort to catch the import, grinding his teeth in impotent wrath. If he could but have seen through the door and two brick walls he might have made out Mr. Stanhope, poker in hand, on guard at the open window of the dark deserted dining-room; a confused cluster of figures on the lawn outside, and in the far moonlit distance a black speck speeding across the playing-fields with another black speck drawing surely and steadily nearer and nearer as the youth and superior training of the head of the school began to tell; a third black figure with a helmet and truncheon was plodding along far behind. Then the cluster on the lawn became definite, and arranged itself into a group of three policemen with a couple of unattractive-looking fellows handcuffed in their midst, and a fourth man coming forward jumped nimbly through the window and touched his hat to Mr. Stanhope.

"A very clever capture, Mr. Inspector," said the master politely.

The officer smiled sourly. "Very well as far as it goes; we've been wanting all those fellows for the Litton Park business, but there's some dashed hanky-panky about this which I can't understand. That young gentleman of yours wasn't exactly the person I expected to see."

"I don't understand. Why?"

"Well, I'm not often mistaken, and I could have sworn that the Count was at the bottom of this job. He's a new pal they picked up in Paris—dark, smart, little beggar, looks a toff, speaks the languages and plays the piano. Don't know him myself, but someone who does saw him in the High Street here about a week ago. He hasn't been round tuning your piano or photographing your house and stables, has he? I shouldn't have been surprised to see him dining here, but I took a look through the window when I posted my men and didn't see anyone like him."

"You can look in at the servants if you choose. All the men are still on the premises. In fact you may search the house if you can do so without alarming my wife."

"Thank you, sir. I'll just go quietly round for my own satisfaction."

Winston, sitting in the dark on his plate-chest heard their steps pause at his door, and with set teeth and caught breath groped in the dark for something to strike with.

"This is the plate-closet, but the key never leaves my possession," Mr. Stanhope's voice said, and they passed by.

Midnight passed and one o'clock struck before that door opened and the master, his bedroom candle in his hand, looked in.

"Hadn't you better come to bed, Winston. It is very late," he said in his usual calm emotionless way. "Mrs. Stanhope had hysterics when she heard of the attempted burglary. She has only just got to sleep, so make no noise."

His pupil went before him upstairs to his room. The Latin grammar still lay open on the toilette table amongst the ivory-backed hair-brushes and silver-mounted pots and bottles, and the pupil flung himself sullenly down in the chair beside it and looked up defiantly questioning. Mr. Stanhope took the other chair as if he were about to resume the lesson.

"Kindly give me an outline of the plans with which I interfered this evening?" he said in his usual school voice.

Winston, for all reply, stretched out a long arm to his trunk and tipped back the lid. Two large thick-lined sacks lay within.

"I should have filled those as full as they would hold and dropped them out of the window. Two men—whose names I reserve—were in waiting outside to receive them. They would have been carried to the fence and lifted over. A cab was in waiting on the other side. No one would remark a stray cab waiting outside your house to-night, you know. It would have been driven to the station. Being market-day here the place would be crowded with all sorts of people carrying all sorts of baggage. In the meantime I should have returned to the drawing-room with the piece of music Miss Norris asked me to lend her—may I send it to her to-morrow, please?—and another of our party would have completed the business by returning to cut out a square of glass, mark the flower-beds with foot-prints, place the

gardener's ladder against the fruit-garden wall and furnish as many other traces as time allowed."

"Good. And you?"

"An urgent telegram from my father will arrive to-morrow after prayers. He is appointed Assistant-supernumerary-Secretary of Legation at Venezuela, and wishes to see me before he goes."

"He does well to telegraph. Otherwise his handwriting and yours are so much alike as to arouse suspicion."

"Well, the game's up!" said Duke pulling himself together. "Do you mind telling me one thing? Why didn't you give me up?"

Mr. Stanhope looked as pleased as when a boy asked him an intelligent question in class.

"I had three reasons. First, the scandal. Secondly, Mrs. Stanhope would have wished me to save you. Thirdly, I thought I could find a better use to put you to. I like you, you know."

"The deuce you do? Why?"

"You work well. I could make you a credit to St. Baldwin's in a year or two; and you're a pleasant gentlemanly little fellow, plucky and good-tempered. I wish we could keep you."

"Won't do. A nice little wolf I feel amongst all these precious lambkins. I should show my teeth presently and end by worrying if I were kept in the fold. It's odd to me that I haven't broken out before this. I find myself wondering if I had the chances these young beggars have—my father was a scholar and a gentleman, that's why I take to books I suppose—but what's the use of talking—I know I couldn't stand the life. You'd end by having to hunt me down and shoot me—the end of all vermin," and the poor wolf showed his white teeth in a snarl while his eyes looked wistful.

"I presume that you consider your present profession the one for which you are best fitted?" Mr. Stanhope put the case delicately.

"I'd like to be a soldier best of all. I've tried to enlist over and over again, but I'm too small. I thought when I was in Paris of trying to get into a Zouave regiment, but I don't know that I could, and it would be hideously lonesome amongst foreigners."

"A friend of mine is going out to organise a body of mounted gendarmerie to put down brigandage in Montenegro. He was wishing for an English volunteer or two."

"Where's the place? How do you get there? I can ride and shoot and learn the language of any country you put me in in a couple of days. Do you really mean I may go?"

"Can you do more than ride and shoot? Can you obey orders? Live a rough life with scanty rations and irregular pay? Give up the pleasures of a town life for hard work in a strange country with the chance of being shot in a scrimmage."

Duke's eyes were flashing brighter and brighter. "Just try me?" he almost gasped.

"I will. That is if you carry out my directions implicitly. We must

let that telegram come, I suppose? Well, if the headmaster consents to your leaving I will see you up to town myself, take you to Captain Markham and tell him the whole story. If he consents to take you with him I will see to your outfit and travelling expenses. You will give me your word of honour to have no further communication with your late companions, nor under any pretext to approach Mrs. Stanhope except to take leave of her. She will not know that it is a final one."

"I promise. But you're sure you mean it? You'll start me fair, help me off, and never let on to anybody what has become of me? Well, I *am* blest!" and the wolf choked as if someone had given him too big a bone to swallow.

For months after Mrs. Stanhope mourned over the loss of her dear boy Marmaduke, and looked out for tidings which came not; after that new interests in her life wiped out the recollection. The eminent oil merchant has taken unto himself a new wife, an ex-maid-of-honour and the daughter of an Irish peer, but has settled a handsome income on Mrs. Stanhope by way of compensation. The gold service has been disposed of by private contract to the infinite relief of its owners Mr. Stanhope still keeps on the boarders, but the story of his most interesting pupil is to this day a secret in St. Baldwin's.

HOPE.

FROM VICTOR HUGO.

Sweet hope, my child, is nothing but a reed:
God holds in hand our days, belovéd one.
He winds them on the wheel that turns with speed.
The thread breaks, and our life-long toil is done.
In every cradle decked with rosy wreath
Lurk germs of death.

Once, long, long years ago, futurity
Before my eyes with purest radiance glowed,
The stars with glory filled the midnight sky,
The sea with halcyon breezes calmly flowed;
But all these visions of an earlier day
Have passed away.

If, near thee, one should turn away to weep,
Ask not the reason of those silent tears;
For they are sweet, and lull men's grief to sleep—
Soft solace in our many cares and fears.
And every teardrop, child, like summer rain
Blots out a stain!

C. E. Meetkerke.

SISTER CLARE.

By George Fosbery.

I.

IT was quite evident that a practitioner, like Dr. Mallory, who seemed to allow himself no higher ambition than to practice among the poorest of the poor, who sacrificed rest and appetite, and health in a never-ending struggle to alleviate the sufferings of the outcast population; it was evident, I say, that such a man as this would never reach the pinnacle of fame attained by those whose principal employment was to administer to the necessities of aristocratic hypochondriacs at two guineas per consultation.

Dr. Mallory was returning to his lodgings one night jaded and hungry, hoping to snatch a few hours' sleep after a well-earned supper when a begrimed urchin of a boy overtook him and caught him by the sleeve. He stopped at once. The boy inquired if he were not "the doctor."

"Yes, I am a doctor."

"If you please, sir, nurse says will you come at once?"

"Certainly." The boy led the way, and Dr. Mallory followed close behind.

"Where do you live?"

"Third pair back, sir. Angel Court, sir. Last house on the right, sir."

"What is your name?"

"Jack. Mother's dying. At least, nurse says she's dying."

"Who is nurse?"

"Sister Clare."

Dr. Mallory's face—a sad face for so young a man—lighted up at the mention of the name. He knew Sister Clare as one, like himself, battling with disease day and night in the attempt to lower, even infinitesimally, the level of the sea of misery around them. She belonged to no recognised sisterhood, and worked in connection with none of the recognised charitable organisations. A something of mystery attached itself to her. No one—least of all, Ernest Mallory—knew whence she came. A year had gone by since the doctor had first become aware of the existence of this rival in his patients' affections. Since then, from time to time, he had met her again under circumstances more or less like the present; and on each occasion had been more strongly attracted by her individuality.

"How," he would ask himself, "does this beautiful girl come to be occupied as she is, in such horrible surroundings? Beautiful she certainly is, and an angel in good works.

Jack led the way to the "third floor back." The doctor entered the room where the boy's mother lay—an apartment of which the squalor was partially betrayed by the dim light of a smoking tallow candle stuck in a bottle for candlestick.

Sister Clare was seated on a cane-chair, of which little more than the framework survived. She rose and met the doctor with a statement of the symptoms in the case of the sick woman stretched upon a heap of rags on the floor.

"She is too weak to be moved to-night to a hospital," she added, "even if they would take her in."

Dr. Mallory made his examination; and taking Sister Clare aside, stated his fear that the wretched patient was dying of sheer starvation. She might recover, he said, if Sister Clare continued to feed her carefully with the jelly which that thoughtful nurse had brought and had already begun to administer. He would come again the first thing in the morning.

Sister Clare offered to remain with the patient so long as was necessary. Jack was told off to accompany the doctor in order to bring back wine for his mother.

Sister Clare followed Dr. Mallory to the door and shook his hand.

"You are not looking well," she said, scanning his face. "Could you be tempted to take a short holiday?"

"I cannot leave these poor sick souls."

"True, they cannot afford to lose you. That is my reason for proposing that you should take a rest."

"It is so easy to fear for one's own health," he said.

"Will you take my advice, Dr. Mallory?" and her smile persuaded him.

"Where am I to go, and for how long? Do not be too exacting."

She paused for a moment, as if wondering how he would take her prescription.

"They are starting a hospital in our village. Will you come down to stay for two or three days, and give us a hint or two? My father and mother will be glad to receive you without ceremony, and you will do just as you please at Drythorpe."

"And you?"

"I am going there to-morrow, after providing for this poor woman's necessities. My mother will write to you. Will you come?"

"Thank you," he replied. "I will come." It was impossible to refuse her.

II.

A couple of days passed. Dr. Mallory was obliged to admit to himself that Sister Clare's warning had been given not a moment too soon. He went about as usual amongst his patients; but for the first time in their experience he failed to inspire them with hope of recovery. The accumulation of misery on every side depressed

him with a weight which hitherto he had always succeeded in throwing off.

On the third morning Dr. Mallory opened a letter which he found upon his plate at the breakfast table. It was written on an ordinary sheet of white paper, enclosed in an ordinary square envelope.

"DRYTHORPE, HANTS. *Thursday.*

"DEAR DR. MALLORY,—My daughter Clare tells me you have generously promised to help us with advice about our village hospital. Can you come down on Saturday, and stay with us for three or four days? It will be a great pleasure to us to see you.

"Believe me, yours sincerely,

"MARGARET EASTON."

The warm welcome which this letter seemed to promise him opened Ernest Mallory's heart.

"The hospitality of these good people will do a poor jaded man like myself more good than that of all the royalties in Christendom."

The evil spirit of dejection had fled! He scarcely realised that Sister Clare was the fairy who had deliberately planned to dissipate his gloom.

Needless to say, Mallory accepted the invitation. He promised to arrive at Drythorpe by the train reaching that station at 5 o'clock in the afternoon. He arranged with another medical man that his patients should not be neglected, and determined to leave town with a clear conscience.

The Saturday afternoon train was crowded with passengers bound for the country. Their noisiness, their high spirits, their struggles with circumstances, their general disposition to make the best of a bad world, brought about a healthier and happier frame of mind in the man who had for so long doomed himself to keep vigil over the sick and dying.

The train drew up at Drythorpe. Dr. Mallory alighted, and asked the station-master "Where some people of the name of Easton lived."

"Going to Lord Easton's, sir?"

"Lord Easton!" repeated the visitor.

"I think this is the gentleman," said the station-master, addressing a footman in livery. Then turning to Dr. Mallory, he added, "His lordship's carriage has come for you, sir."

The doctor, too surprised to resist, was thus borne off to Lord Easton's family seat at Drythorpe.

III.

At Drythorpe—the mansion which gave the village its name—Dr. Mallory was received with a welcome which would have satisfied many a much greater man than he was in the world's estimation.

Lord and Lady Easton were kindness itself, as the phrase runs. The Honourable Clare Easton had doffed the comparatively gloomy uniform of the nurse, and appeared before him for the first time in the costume appropriate to country life.

He was puzzled to find that her manner also was changed. Was it for the worse? He could not yet answer this question. As a fact, he had never before met her in circumstances corresponding to those in which she had been born and bred. Was it fair to find fault with her for yielding to the reaction which came with her absence from the common scenes of suffering? Of course not. It was only natural that when the strain of her duties was removed she should fly back to the easy, contented, and more cheerful ways of life in keeping with her social station. And yet the change came upon him as a shock—that anyone should desert the path of heroism in order to saunter down the broad road of comfort and forgetfulness.

On the other hand, in her new position she appeared to him in a totally different light. Divested of the outward and visible emblems of her profession (namely, the nurse's bonnet and cloak), which undoubtedly enveloped her with an air of business rather than pleasure, she now shone as the type of English beauty at its best—save that her cheeks had lost a little of the bloom that speaks of perfect health.

This view of her personality tended to arouse once more a feeling of admiration which Dr. Mallory had thrust back, again and again, in his former relations with her among the London poor. It was hard formerly to admit that Sister Clare could be nothing to him, except a colleague and acquaintance; and he could not reconcile himself to the thought that Miss Easton should be even less.

Would anyone for a moment entertain a proposal that the Peer's daughter should be given in marriage to the pauper's physician? Had not the pauper's physician enough pride to put his foot down, and to say to himself that he would never make that proposal, that he would never allow it to be thought, much less bruited about, that he loved Miss Easton for her wealth and station?

"Alas!" he mused, "if she had only been what I expected her to be—a village maiden, a poor man's child, a humble diamond!"

The party at dinner numbered six. When Dr. Mallory entered the drawing-room two strangers had arrived; Mrs. Dunthorne and her son, the Reverend Horace Dunthorne, the curate at Drythorpe.

Dr. Mallory noticed instantly that the curate claimed to be very intimate with Miss Easton. The two were sitting slightly apart from

the others in the room, and conversing with a rapidity and familiarity which could only be the result of old acquaintance.

When dinner was announced, Lord Easton offered his arm to Mrs. Dunthorne; the parson walked off with Miss Easton; and the doctor had the honour of taking her ladyship.

Dr. Mallory was not his usual self, clearly. Yet he had no right to feel aggrieved, merely because the curate was an older friend of Miss Easton than himself. Why should he object to two young people, who had known one another since they were children, having a good deal to say to each other, and enjoying reminiscences in which a stranger had no part or share?

He was annoyed, nevertheless. Lady Easton seemed to him by no means an efficient substitute for Clare. Besides, he had come down to Drythorpe at some little inconvenience, in the hope of being of use to Miss Easton. He had no wish to play second fiddle to a giggling boy, whose familiarity with the family verged upon impudence.

Assuredly Dr. Mallory was not his better self on that night. At any other time he would have tossed aside all feelings of jealousy as being unworthy of him. But when a man is low in health, mole-hills grow into mountains; and when he is well again, he has to face the results.

On Sunday the Rev. Horace Dunthorne's sermon was the centre of attraction. On Monday the Rev. Horace Dunthorne's presence was indispensable during the consideration of the needs of the village hospital. On Monday evening the Rev. Horace Dunthorne dined again with the Eastons.

On Tuesday morning Dr. Mallory made his excuses, and returned to London.

On the following day, after having sat up all night with one of his patients, Dr. Mallory came to an end of his physical capacity. He returned to his lodgings with difficulty. He could scarcely turn the handle of the street door and let himself into the house; an overpowering weakness grew upon him; and he fainted

An hour later he was found lying insensible on the stairs.

IV.

For many years Dr. Mallory had overworked himself. From the moment when he decided to study medicine, he had thrown himself heart and soul into his calling. He had always read with an indifference to physical conditions; for which liberty with Nature he was now being duly punished.

Dr. Mallory—like so many others—thought he knew to a nicety how far it was safe to strain the laws of health. An unexpected and unusual factor had been inserted in his life by the presence and

influence of Sister Clare; and the doctor, who had long sailed so close to the wind, was swamped (so to speak) by the squall.

Dr. Mallory's landlady discovered her lodger huddled at the foot of the stair. Borrowing, no doubt, from an imagination inspired by her own surroundings in life, she concluded that the worthy physician had dined on the previous night "not wisely, but too well." With the aid of a strong girl as intelligent as herself, she conveyed the doctor to his room, and laid him on his bed—to "come to" in due course.

In due course he came to, but in such a manner that the unhappy ravings of brain fever were mistaken for homicidal mania. Landlady and girl therefore fled the house incontinently, leaving the street door to shut of its own accord, and the doctor to take care of himself.

When the two fugitives had detailed the circumstances to a neighbour round the corner, they realised that further steps ought to be taken. They applied therefore for the aid of a policeman; and, accompanied by a burly constable, returned to their dwelling.

To their astonishment, the house was still standing. To their still greater astonishment, however, Dr. Mallory was being tended by a good-looking young lady in a nurse's costume. At her side stood the urchin Jack waiting for orders.

"This little lad," explained Sister Clare (of course it was she !)—"this little lad saw Dr. Mallory in the street, and feared he was ill; so he came and fetched me."

"No harm, miss, I'm sure," simpered the landlady.

"Why has your lodger been left in such a critical condition?" asked Sister Clare. "And what is the constable doing here?"

"Lor', miss! I never knew as the gentleman was critical. I thought he were a bit off his head. Can I do anything?"

Sister Clare did not then and there accept the offer of services. She dismissed the constable, who withdrew respectfully. She sent Jack for the physician who had lately helped Dr. Mallory. She then informed the landlady that the doctor was dangerously ill, and that she herself intended to remain and nurse him. The good woman was therefore requested to put up a bed for her in the sitting-room, immediately.

Dr. Mallory's escape from death was a narrow one. His recovery was entirely due to the faithful nursing of Sister Clare. At last the fever had run its course, and the wandering mind slowly regained its balance.

In more ways than one Sister Clare contributed to his recovery. Not only had her devoted nursing snatched him from the very brink of the grave; but her presence by his bedside, when he began to recover consciousness and reason, helped him more than all the drugs in the world.

For the first day or two after his return to his senses, Sister Clare played the tyrant; she would not allow him to make any effort or to indulge in unnecessary conversation.

One morning, when the early light of dawn crept in through the half-drawn curtains, Ernest Mallory partly awakened out of a sleep full of visions of his good angel. He had just dreamt how he confessed to Sister Clare the love for her which now possessed him, and how he offered her his life's devotion in return for her self-sacrificing care. Her reply, so the dream ran, pierced him to the heart; for she claimed that a poor pauper's doctor had no right to aspire to a peer's daughter. It was at this moment that his senses came nearer to earth; and, as he realised that he had been only dreaming, the sting of her supposed rejection of his love grew less painful. Nevertheless a resolution formed itself clearly in his mind, and forced itself desperately from his lips.

"I love you, Clare! I love you! But you must never know!"

Presently the morning sun mounted above the low mist upon the horizon, and its bright rays lighted up the sick man's room. The glory of awakening day stimulated energies which had for weeks lain exhausted, and Mallory felt an impulse to rise and sit up in bed. But something hindered him. It did not take him long to discover what it was.

Sister Clare sat beside his pillow, and her gentle eyes were looking eagerly into his. She smiled and spoke.

"Ernest."

Mallory, believing himself for the moment to be the victim of a dream, regarded her with a dazed expression. Had he not heard her call him by a more familiar title than is sanctioned by ordinary custom? Yes. Was he deceiving himself? No. Was he awake? Yes. It was fact, and no empty vision: she spoke again.

"Ernest!"

"Sister Clare!" he muttered in bewilderment.

"Let me be Sister Clare no more, but henceforth 'Clare,' and only 'Clare.'"

"I scarcely understand."

"Scarcely understand! Look into your heart. What do you find there, for me? What did you exclaim a little while ago?"

Mallory, wondering at her words, and hugging the delusion of his own irremediable unworthiness, answered her with the truth, and nothing but the truth—but not the whole truth.

"I find more in my heart than perhaps I have a right to say in your hearing—respect, admiration, heart-felt gratitude——" He paused.

"Is that all?" she asked.

"It is much," he pleaded evasively; and his eyes dropped before her questioning gaze.

"It is not enough," she complained; "not enough for me."

"What more can I give? What more do you ask?"

"Everything!"

"'Everything' is vague. I am in danger of misunderstanding. I might pain you greatly by saying all that is in my mind."

"You are wrong," she broke in, impressively. "To hide the truth is only to frame an error."

"Yet the truth must sometimes be hidden," he retorted gently, "for Duty's sake, if not for Delicacy."

"Well," she laughed, archly, "though you insist on misunderstanding me, for Duty's sake, I decline to submit, in the interests of Delicacy. Surely, neither is more admirable than Truth."

"What truth?" he inquired.

"That I love you, Ernest—as just now you said you loved me!"

Mallory shut his eyes and drew a quick breath. "Miss Easton—I beg—I must not listen—you have perhaps mistaken——"

"I do not think I have, Ernest. You love me—is it not so?—and you have rashly vowed never to tell me so."

"How do you know this?" he asked eagerly, while his whole face flushed with confusion at the thought of her having learnt his secret.

"Forgive me," she said; "I have played the eavesdropper here, while you have betrayed yourself in sleep—or out of sleep, I know not which. But you shall not rob yourself of happiness, to please Dame Duty; and I will not doom myself to single misery, to please Madam Delicacy. Ernest, I know that you love me!"

"And then?"

"I cannot live without your love."

"Clare!—dear Clare!—is this the truth?"

For answer, she first stooped and kissed the thin hand that lay in hers; then she added: "It is the whole truth."

For a minute Mallory seemed unable to awaken fully to his good fortune. When he did so, he wisely and unconditionally surrendered to necessity.

"You are right, Clare—my love—my darling! The error has brought me very low—the truth will save me."

He reached out his hands, and, taking her fair head in them, drew her to him till his lips met hers, and pent-up affection and life-long gratitude were expressed in the first kiss of true love.

* * * *

In the seclusion of the library at Drythorpe, Clare Easton, sitting at her father's knee, recounted how she had as good as "proposed", to Ernest Mallory.

"Pretty goings-on!" remarked the old lord, good-humouredly. "Everything turns topsy-turvy nowadays. Your dear mother, Clare, would never have dreamt of proposing to me——" His daughter stopped him with a kiss and a laugh:

"What! daddy—not even in Leap Year?"

ON READING "MASTERS OF THE WORLD."

What would I, were the power mine,
Dost thou inquire, generous soul?
I'd range the world from pole to pole,
And learn of living life the whole,
Nor should the Present me confine.

For I would wander through the Past,
And know all men the world has known;
The Tyrant threatening on his throne,
The Thrall that at its base did groan;
I'd know all life from first to last.

Fair Baiae, loved of sea and sky,
I climb thy heights, I join the throng;
We bear the purple grapes along,
And, moving, chant a vintage song
To Bacchus—bounteous deity.

Or, with sweet Tertia all the day,
I mourn beside her perished Pasht;
Cruel the heavens from which it flash'd,
The vulture, and the claws which dash'd
Her playmate down and spoilt her play.

Ah! Pasht is gone and Tertia fled,
For hark! Great Piso loudly calls
Thrice on her name—from roof and walls
The name comes back; but Pluto's halls
Retain our Tertia: she is dead.

Great Piso—greater in thy death
Than in thy life, though that was great;
How grand the words thou spak'st of late,
In spite of seeming frowning fate,
"All, all is well," thy latest breath.

Thus, friend, though still my wish is vain,
It is, in sooth, not wholly so;
For, by thy gift I seem to know
The old-World Masters, and to grow
Familiar with their joy and pain.

John Jervis Beresford, M.A.

THE INDIAN EMERALDS.

FOUNDED ON FACT.

I.

NO house appears to good advantage in the fast-deepening twilight of a November day, but Elmbrook Court probably stands the test as well as any in England. It is one of the loveliest of the pretty half-timbered houses of which Worcestershire can boast a goodly show; and even under the dreariest circumstances, always looks hospitable and enticing. The exterior does not belie the interior, for the quaint, low, panelled sitting-rooms, with latticed windows and wide window-seats, are as delightful as one could imagine; and though the house does not possess the inevitable bedroom in which Charles I. once slept—if tradition is to be trusted, that unlucky monarch must have spent most of his time in a house-to-house visitation of his subjects—the upper storeys consist of charming rooms with quaint closets and recesses, and the landings all have fascinating windows. There are steps up and down everywhere, and no two rooms seem to visitors to be on the same level.

The present owner, Geoffrey Brooke, tenth owner of the name and house, was a gentle, unworldly man, as unlike the typical British Squire as possible—a man who had always left his property and money matters in the hands of his steward, with the result in his case of an annually decreasing income, and who was only occasionally roused from his antiquarian studies by the alarming growth and astounding demands of his eleven children. The family would have come to grief long since but for the practical common-sense and economy of his wife, one of the Worcestershire Guises, who inherited the true Gallic business capacities of her Huguenot ancestors, but whose devotion to the kitchen and dairy debarred her family from benefiting much by her society.

On a certain November evening the children of this ill-assorted couple were gathered round a blazing fire in the oak parlour, a splendid old room, whose floor, ceiling and walls are of rich black oak. Their unfailing subject of conversation—the declining state of the family position and finances—was under discussion, but with rather more detail than usual, for the benefit of their guest, the Honourable Frank Temple, who, however, seemed to find more enjoyment in looking at the charming face of Olivia, the eldest girl, than in listening to the diatribes of her brothers and sisters.

"Come, Olivia," said Geoffrey, "you needn't reprove us for being discontented; it's quite natural that we should feel being so pinched, and

having our position in the county lowered. It's very hard to see these upstarts, who made their money goodness knows how, taking our place. And I know you always feel not being able to go to the County Ball."

"Is the County Ball the goal of your earthly hopes and desires, Miss Brooke?" asked Mr. Temple.

"I used to think so, but I don't now; I've got past all that," laughed this mature maiden of twenty-three. "But I wish Amy and Alice and Helen could go. Somehow it's different from other balls."

"You know, Mr. Temple, all our family misfortunes date from a County Ball about a hundred and fifty years ago," said Amy, the romantic one of the family, who sometimes helped her father in his literary work, and had a large knowledge of family history. "And I always think if *we* could go to one, our luck might turn—it's certainly worth trying—don't you think so?"

"Decidedly," answered the young man. "But how came this by-gone ball to have such disastrous effects?"

"It's quite a romantic tale; a mystery in fact that's never been solved. Would you like to hear it? Perhaps you will be able to suggest some explanation of the matter. Jack, put some more wood on first, and, children, you must leave off scuffling or go into the nursery."

The little ones settled themselves on the hearth, and their elders having drawn up closer to the blaze, Amy began:

"The Brookes used to be wealthy and very important people in the county, and at one time there was a title in the family, but that, like other good things, has taken wing. The family jewels must have been splendid, judging by the inventories papa has in his possession. In particular, there was an emerald necklace and bracelets, worth a fabulous sum, which an Indian prince had given to a Captain Brooke, in the sixteenth century, for saving his life. These were prized more than anything else, and always belonged to the eldest daughter from her seventeenth birthday until she was married. She wore them for the wedding and then they were put by for her successor, so that they were never taken out of the direct family line, and there was a tradition that as long as the rule was faithfully observed, good fortune would attend the Brookes, and *vice versâ*.

"About a hundred and fifty years ago—that would be in Queen Anne's reign—the head of the house was a Lord Brooke, a dreadful man, who was always card-playing and drinking. He had only one son and daughter, whom he neglected shamefully, and as his wife had long been dead, they naturally grew up headstrong and self-willed.

"Lady Olivia—there is always an Olivia in every generation—was a most lovely girl—have you noticed that portrait between the windows there, Mr. Temple, because she was the original of it? She was painted in the famous emeralds."

Mr. Temple replied that he had not, but would do so presently.

"Well, you know the portraits of a given period are always alike," the fair narrator resumed. "She was just a beauty of the Queen Anne period, and was very much admired and sought after. Perhaps we should not have known much about her life, but fortunately she kept a little diary for two or three years, which papa found in an old bureau. Poor Olivia must have had a miserable time, for her father was harsh with her, and though she seemed very fond of Gilbert, her brother, he soon began to follow in his father's footsteps. Lord Brooke had a friend almost his own age, Sir Marmaduke Ray, and when Olivia was twenty, this dreadful old fellow proposed to her. Of course she refused him, but he only laughed, and said he should have her no matter what she said, for her father had given his consent."

"A little head-strong," laughed Frank Temple.

"She had good cause," returned Amy.

"There is a pitiful account in the diary of the scene she had with her father; but the old wretch said it was quite true, he firmly intended her to marry Sir Marmaduke, and she ought to think herself fortunate to have the chance. Poor girl, it wasn't only that she hated old Sir Marmaduke, but she loved some one else, to whom, indeed, she was secretly engaged. Of course he was penniless, and only the son of the vicar at Hampton."

"And was she penniless also?" asked Mr. Temple.

"Why, no, she was a great heiress—hence all her trouble," returned Olivia. "Well, matters went on very miserably for a time. Sir Marmaduke was always coming here, but Olivia refused to acknowledge him as her lover. Her father and brother treated her abominably, and compelled her to be present at their card-parties, and they all used to get drunk and quarrel, until her life grew unbearable. She hadn't many chances of seeing Edgar Mence, but managed to meet him one day in the autumn, and told him she was certain her father meant the marriage to come off soon, but she would kill herself first. They talked it over, and decided that if the Earl did not bring matters to a crisis in the winter, she should try to bear it until the spring, when she would be of age; and then they could be married. She would be rich then, because she would have all her mother's immense fortune. So it was agreed, and Olivia went home comforted, while Edgar returned to Oxford, but he promised to come down for the County Ball on the first of December.

"A few days before the ball Lord Brooke told Olivia that she was to appear as the affianced bride of Sir Marmaduke, and the wedding would take place at Christmas. She implored her brother to save her, but he said he had no power in the matter; and there was no one else she could turn to. She had no means of sending her lover a letter without her father's knowledge, and so all her trouble was confided to her diary, and in the three last days before the ball she wrote many pages. It is very interesting, but terribly touching; I

couldn't read it aloud to save my life. But it is evident from the very last entry, written just before she dressed for the ball, that she intended to run away with Edgar that night if they could elude her father's eye. All that we know after that is tradition, or what we found in a few old letters, so that I can't give you much detail."

"I think we are having quite enough detail as it is," struck in Geoffrey, ungallantly.

"Well, they all went to the ball," continued Amy, passing over the interruption. "Edgar was there, and I'm afraid Olivia behaved very rashly, considering the nature of the men whose hands she was in, for she danced many times with Edgar, and treated Sir Marmaduke with marked indifference; but whether she entered upon their plan of eloping no one knows for certain. The coachman and footmen said afterwards that Olivia got into the family coach with her father and brother, and that Sir Marmaduke spoke to her through the window before mounting his horse to ride home to Kempsey, which is on the other side of Worcester; and then they rattled home here to Elmbrook. It was about two o'clock when they arrived, and the house servants had gone to bed, after preparing supper as usual in this very room. The footmen said the two gentlemen had both taken too much and were very abusive; and they saw Lady Olivia in her dark-hooded cloak run across the hall to go up-stairs, but the Earl pulled her back; and he and Gilbert dragged her into this room and shut the door. After that the men saw no more, as they had to go to the stables. And whether their tale is true or not no one has ever seen Lady Olivia since; at least, no one has owned to it. She and the emeralds disappeared that night as completely as if they had dissolved.

"And from that time the fortunes of the Brookes have steadily declined. Gilbert was killed in a duel soon after, and, when the Earl died, after a most miserable old age, the property passed to another branch of the family, and though there have been a variety of Brookes since then, good, bad and indifferent, with large families and small, they seem to have been more or less under a curse ever since. Their enterprises are generally unsuccessful, banks they are in fail, their ricks take fire, their cattle have the plague, their children take all the prevalent epidemics and many of them die by accident. Two of our uncles died violent deaths, and we had two little sisters drowned. For my part I firmly believe what the old housekeeper said when she was dying, that until poor Olivia's body had Christian burial, and the jewels were restored to the family, misfortune would be the lot of the Brookes."

And Amy, having finished her story, lay back in her chair with a despondent sigh.

"Thank you very much," said Frank Temple. "I have enjoyed the story, and would gladly assist at Lady Olivia's obsequies, if we could only find her bones—for I don't suppose there is much else left

after a hundred and fifty years. But surely this room is haunted, or her ghost walks the ancestral domains somewhere?"

"I don't know about that," said Amy; "we've never seen it ourselves, nor heard of it, but this room was never used again during her father's lifetime. But what is your explanation of the mystery?"

"I'm afraid the detective business isn't much in my line," laughed Frank Temple, "especially with such slender clues for guidance; but I should say she escaped out of the house to waylay Edgar on his return to Oxford, and was accidentally drowned."

"That's very far-fetched," returned Amy; "mere supposition. We feel sure she was murdered." And she gave an effective little shiver as she spoke.

"Oh, look at the moon!" cried one of the little girls; "isn't it bright?"

They all looked up and saw the setting crescent shining through the mist of the November night.

"Why, we forgot to close the shutters," said Olivia; "how dreary to sit here with those bare windows behind us. We shall have ghosts looking upon us."

"Rubbish to ghosts and murders," cried Geoffrey. "Amy, you've always some thrilling story on hand. But I'm glad its clearing up, Temple; we shall be able to go out with the ferrets after dinner now."

Just then the arrival of nurse for the children, and the sound of the dressing-bell, broke up the cosy party in the oak parlour.

II.

Not until Christmas Eve was there another gathering round the fire in the oak parlour. A sharp attack of congestion of the lungs, entailing five weeks in his bedroom was the result of that evening's ferreting for Geoffrey Brooke; and though Frank Temple paid less dearly for his sport, a heavy cold kept him a prisoner—(a very willing one, it must be confessed)—at the Court, far beyond his intended stay. When well enough to leave, he gladly yielded to the request that he should prolong his visit beyond Christmas, in order that he might help to amuse the invalid, who, like most men unaccustomed to sickness, led his family a lively dance during his convalescence. Even affectionate, patient Olivia, on whom most of the nursing devolved, found her forbearance and skill taxed to the utmost, and heartily appreciated the help afforded by their guest. While he, on his side, found his services amply rewarded by the society of the head nurse, and it was not long before the admiration and liking he had always felt for her, deepened into an all-absorbing passion as he realised the hidden beauty of her disposition.

Happily the worst was over in time for them to look forward to an unbroken circle round the festive board on Christmas Day; and on

Christmas Eve Geoffrey's couch was drawn up in front of a splendid fire of pine-knots, and his sisters and brothers and the devoted Frank gathered round it, in order that they might once more feast their eyes on the handsome face, for Geoffrey, in spite of his overbearing ways, was the idol of the family.

The gentle old Squire, with a heavy burden rolled off his heart, went back to pore over his beloved tomes, and Mrs. Brooke, after placing a tableful of invalid dishes within reach, returned to the culinary preparations for the morrow, and the young people were left to themselves.

"It is more than six weeks since we all sat here together," said Alice.

"Yes, we didn't think then that we were on the verge of another of the inevitable Brooke misfortunes," returned Amy; "but I'm prepared for anything now."

"The best thing we can do is to set about finding that necklace," said Mr. Temple, "before your views of life become any blacker than they are already, Miss Amy."

"I wish we could," she answered. "I firmly believe it's hidden somewhere in the house; and we should know it again by the portrait, whatever condition it was in."

"Are we going to put up any holly here?" said Helen, whose thoughts were always flying off at a tangent.

"Yes, we'll have a little," answered Olivia. "Jack, fetch some out of the hall and help the girls to put it up."

Jack brought in a huge bough of holly, some ivy wreaths and a hammer.

"Jack, it's no use bringing that hammer; you know papa won't allow any nails to be driven in this room."

"Oh, bother! As if two or three little ones would hurt! We might as well have no holly if it's only to be skied on those fusty old pictures. I want to hang a bit of ivy and mistletoe on that panel on the other side of the fireplace; it looks so bare with nothing to correspond to the clock here."

Knowing that remonstrance was useless, Olivia let Jack select his wreaths and squeeze behind the settee to fix them on the desired spot.

"Now, girls," he began, sketching a design on the wall with his finger, "now do you think that will do? It won't hurt if I stick a little nail here and here"—and he rapped the wall with his hammer in a few places. "I say," he cried suddenly, "doesn't this sound different to you—here—and here? We are on the eve of a thrilling discovery; the long-hidden secret is about to be revealed. Here is the proverbial closet containing the proverbial skeleton, the only thing wanting is a keyhole and key. Now, Amy, turn your antiquarian lore to practical use for once, and show us how the ancients used to open panel cupboards." And the orator commenced a devil's tattoo with his hammer.

"I wish you'd stop that row," said the invalid, irritably; "if you are going to drive any nails in, just be quick about it, and then come out and be quiet."

"All right. Light the lamp, Olive, and then I shall only be a minute or two," said the irrepressible Jack, and with the aid of a light he soon had the ivy arranged to his satisfaction.

As he moved away, Mr. Temple took the hammer from him, saying:

"One moment, Geoffrey; I agree with Jack that this part of the wall does sound rather different from the others;" and he struck a smart blow on the bevelled part of the panel, about five feet from the ground. There was a singular click, followed by the snap of a spring. The girls gave a shriek and the boys a shout, then Jack exclaimed:

"Didn't I tell you? I knew there was a cupboard there."

"Calm yourself," said Geoffrey; "it is probably nothing but a place for cleaning the chimney."

"Come here, Jack," said Mr. Temple, "and when I strike, push the panel with all your strength." Jack was quite ready, and the instant the hammer touched the magic spot, flung himself against the wall. There was the curious grating sound of rusty hinges trying to act, the panel slowly receded a few inches on one side, and then stuck.

The girls rushed to the corner, and the children danced wildly round the room without any clear idea of what was happening; Spot and Nero barked, and even the supercilious Geoffrey sat up and shared the general excitement.

"The hinges want oiling. Alf, fetch the oil-can."

Never had the indolent Alfred obeyed an order with such alacrity.

"Pfff!" cried Jack, anointing the rusty iron; "there is a most musty odour in the den, whatever else may be there. I should think the evil deeds of a hundred Brookes are bottled up here."

By means of oiling and working the door backwards and forwards, the hinges at last yielded, and the heavy oaken panel stood wide open, making a doorway about five feet high and three wide. Before the eyes of the excited group was a vaulted closet, but the cloud of dust that arose on Jack's stepping in prevented them at first from seeing anything of its size or contents.

When this had settled a little, Mr. Temple held up the lamp so that its light was shed over the whole chamber except that part behind the open door. It was about six feet wide and ten long, running the whole distance from the fireplace to the outside wall of the house.

"What a disappointment!" cried Helen, for a couple of rusty iron boxes, and a pile of mouldy books seemed to be the sole contents of the secret chamber.

"Did you expect it to be full of bags of gold, diamonds and pearls?" asked Alfred.

"What's that behind the door, Jack?" said Mr. Temple, entering with the lamp. They stepped beyond the door, which concealed a third of the closet, and then a horrified shout from both young men sent a thrill and shock through the expectant watchers in the parlour.

"Lady Olivia!" cried Jack; "emeralds and all!" Before Frank Temple could prevent them, the whole party except Olivia and the two little ones had rushed into the closet, and the long-hidden mystery of Lady Olivia Brooke's disappearance lay revealed before them.

Partly supported on an oak chest, and partly propped against the corner of the walls, was a skeleton about the average height of women, and on the chest and floor around it were mouldering heaps of rags, some of which fell to pieces on being touched, while others still retained the crispness, and in some instances showed the pattern of eighteenth-century brocade. Any doubt that might have existed as to the identity of the skeleton was set at rest by the ghastly fact of its still wearing the Indian emerald necklace. Though the jewellery was discoloured and covered with dust, the young Brookes recognised it instantly by the peculiar design of the setting, with which the portrait had always made them familiar. Scattered about the floor lay bracelets and other jewels.

Meanwhile Olivia had hurried the youngsters into the nursery, and summoned her parents. Though he had no taste for horrors and mystery, the old gentleman's antiquarian instincts were all on the alert, and he was soon on the spot. Knowing what they all did of the poor young heiress's story, it was not difficult to form what, there is no doubt, was the true theory respecting her end.

The men-servants were evidently correct in saying that the Earl and Gilbert forced her into the parlour with them when they returned from the ball; and inflamed with wine and anger had probably sought to terrify the defenceless girl into compliance. But she was not a Brooke for nothing, and her spirit was as haughty and stubborn as their own, and though no one would accuse them of deliberately murdering the unfortunate girl, it can be easily understood that Olivia's defiance would enrage the brutality of her natural protectors until they raised their hands against her; and everyone knows how often a hasty blow struck in anger has had fatal results.

Evidently no blood was shed, or traces of it would have been found next morning, for it is not easily got rid of. Terror has a very sobering effect; and, alarmed and horrified at what they had done, Lord Brooke and his son must have carried their victim into the wall-closet (the secret of which was probably known only to themselves), and placed her in the position in which she was found, and then concocted a tale to account for her disappearance.

It is not likely that they intended to leave the body in the closet, but their probable intention of burying it at a favourable opportunity was frustrated by Gilbert's death. No wonder the old Earl never

dared to venture into the oak parlour again, and finding no suspicion attached to the place, doubtless congratulated himself on the security of his victim's tomb, which had remained intact for a hundred and fifty years.

The Squire would not allow the closet to be disturbed in any way until he had consulted the rector; and he and the worthy old gentleman—they were both magistrates—having decided that an inquest was unnecessary, the panel door was closed again until two days after Christmas, when all that remained of the once blooming Olivia Brooke was quietly laid to rest in the ancestral grave.

The rector, in virtue of his combined spiritual and worldly authority, himself removed the Indian Prince's gift, and when the bones were lifted from the chest into the coffin, an irrefragable proof of the Earl's guilt was brought to light. In the folds of a remnant of the brocaded ball dress, was a signet ring, engraved with his monogram and crest, and the date of his coming of age. There it lay, as it must have fallen from his finger. The iron boxes and chest did not contain much that was of pecuniary value, beyond some quaint old silver and jewellery, but they held what was of infinitely greater worth in the eyes of the unworldly old Squire—a quantity of seventeenth-century letters and documents that were just what he wanted for the completion of his "History of the Brooke Family;" the studying and editing of which gave him happy employment for the rest of his life.

The emeralds were sent to Birmingham to be cleaned and furbished up, but the good taste of the family forbade any alteration in the setting; and when they came back to the Court, they were the envy and admiration of all beholders. Of course they fell to the lot of Olivia, for the time being, but the tender-hearted girl could never be prevailed on to wear them. And, indeed, she had not many opportunities; for before another county ball had taken place, she was the Honourable Mrs. Francis Temple, and her Christmas was spent in Florence.

The luck of the Brookes certainly turned after that memorable Christmas Eve, but we suspect it was hardly so much owing to the fulfilling of the prophecy, as to Geoffrey's assuming the care of the estate, and, backed by the advice and money of his brother-in-law, to his clever management thereof.

The girls all married well, though it was always a bitter potion that none of them were ever allowed to wear the emeralds; and it was not until last year, when Geoffrey's seventeen-year-old daughter Olivia made her début, that the Indian jewels again adorned the neck and arms of a Brooke.

SHIRLEY CREWE.

A MISUNDERSTANDING.

THERE came a shadow between them
  Like a mist-wreath white and thin,
A door had been left unguarded,
  And the evil doubt crept in.

Like the breath of some baleful fever,
  Like a blight in the summer air,
It darken'd the beautiful palace
  Which love had made so fair.

Two that had journey'd together
  Now parted sore afraid,
And ever the gloom grew deeper
  That the cruel shadow had made.

"Alas! and could he have said it?"
  One cried in her angry pain—
And "Alas! and could she believe it?"
  Came back like a sad refrain.

Till at last one said, "I will trust him,
  I have done him a bitter wrong,
That I question'd even a moment
  The friend I have tried so long."

And the other said, "I will seek her,
  'Tis surely some ill surmise;
I shall know if her faith has failed her
  By a single look in her eyes."

Once more they stood together—
  The two that should yet be one—
But the shadow melted before them
  As a mist-wreath flees the sun.

"Forgive me," he said, "I will tell you.
  'Twas a story writ in sand;"
"Nay, forgive me," she sobbed; "but I trust you,
  And I care not to understand."

And the house was full of the sunlight,
  For the shadow dark and drear
Fell dead in the shining presence
  Of the love that casts out fear.

CHRISTIAN BURKE.

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The Argosy

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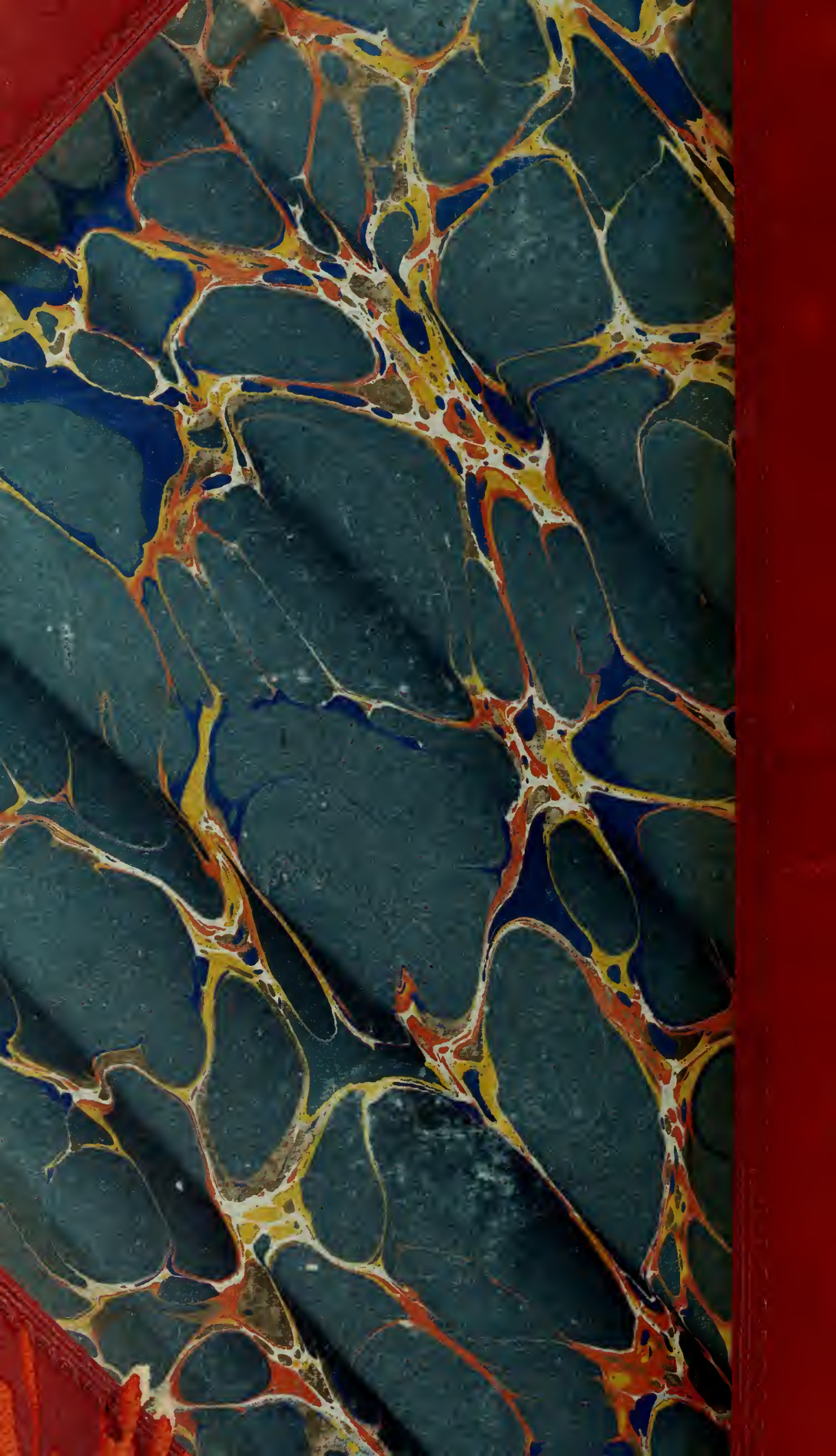
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